

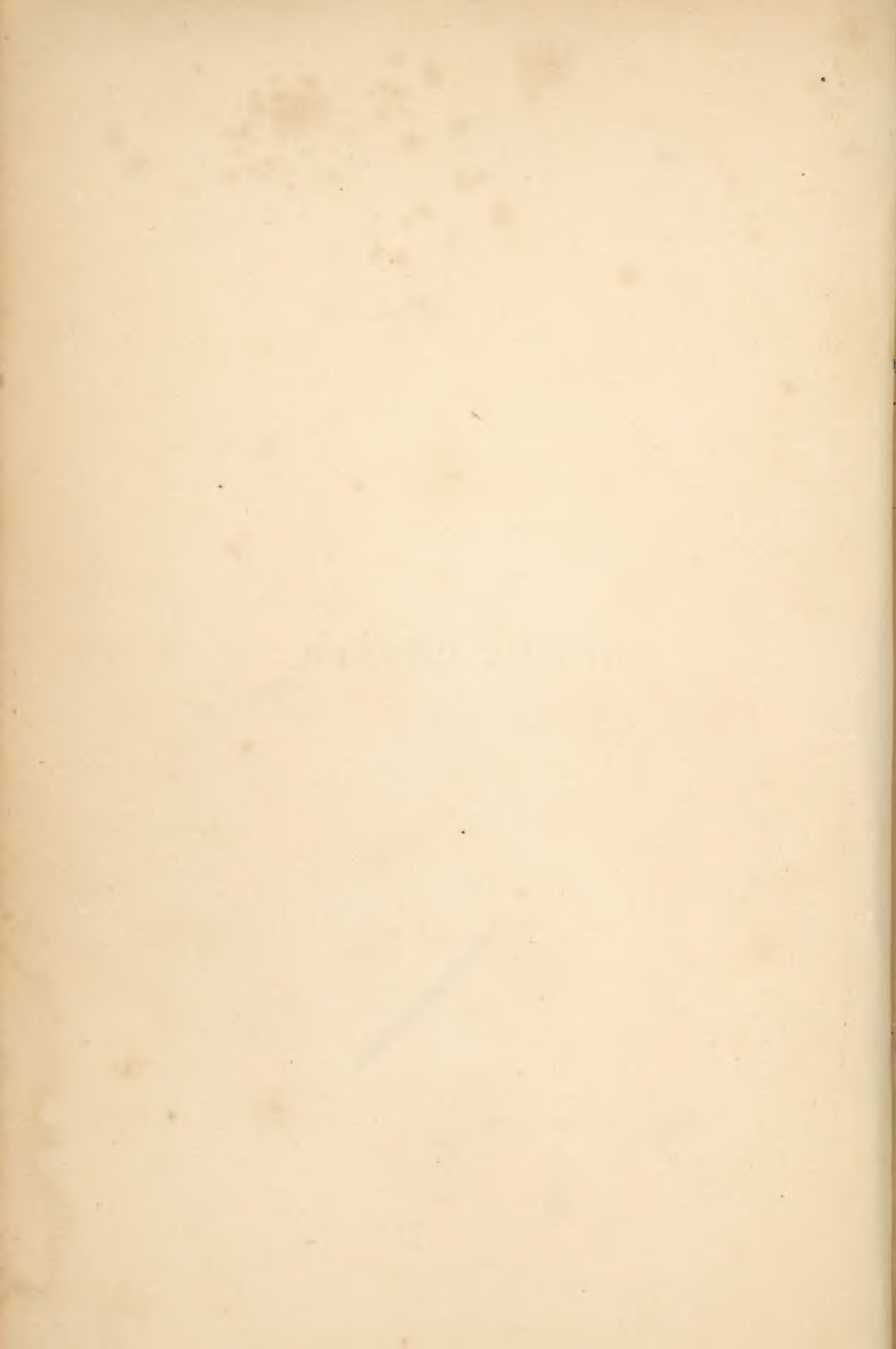


Rhoda's Corner.

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Rhoda.

RHODA'S CORNER.

BY

A. M. MITCHELL PAYNE,

AUTHOR OF "THE CASH BOY'S TRUST," ETC.

"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."



NEW YORK:

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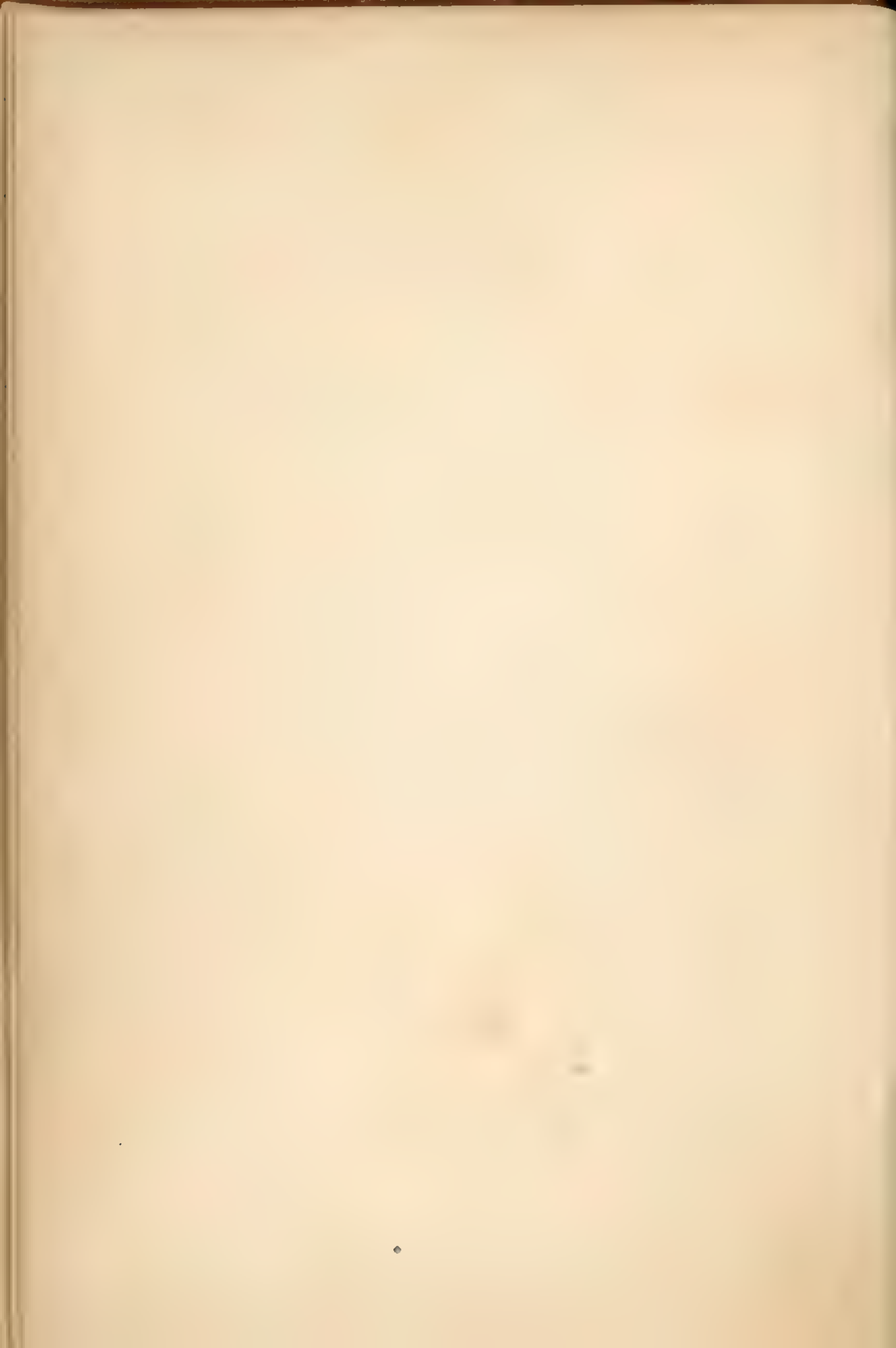
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RHODA'S CORNER.

CHAPTER I.

THE GIFT.

"You in your small corner,
And I in mine."

RHODA stood impatiently with flushed cheeks and trembling hands by her own little table, upon which rested a package just received by post. It was longer than wide, and felt like a picture. Rhoda passed her hands all over it before she attempted to unloose the string, and tried to conjecture who had sent her a present. We always attempt to discover the writer of a letter by the superscription, and the contents

of a parcel by feeling, before we solve the doubt by breaking the seals.

Rhoda could not stop to untie the knots, so, snatching a pair of scissors from her basket, she snipped the string in two or three places, and hastily tore the paper folds away.

“Oh, how pretty!” she exclaimed, as the pasteboard was revealed. It was a large illuminated text, the work evidently of careful and skilled fingers, and the words were a command.

“Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.”

The large B which commenced the text was formed of tea roses, half open and yet in bud, with a faint, scroll-like tracing of the letter which seemed merely a lattice-work upon which the roses climbed; the other letters of the word, and indeed all the remaining words, were a delicate tracery of

lilies-of-the-valley, with smooth green leaves peeping out here and there.

“That came from Aunt Lottie,” said Rhoda, decidedly; “nobody else knows just how to please me most. The next thing is a frame to suit it. I wonder where Aunt Jane is.”

There was no stopping-place in Rhoda's life; there was always a next thing to be thought of or done. Life was full of interest to her, and she always tried to find work for herself out of every thing. Aunt Jane, the housekeeper, said, “Ever since Rhoda was a baby it has been pleasant to have her 'round, for she can make a bright day out of any thing.” Just now it was the new text and a frame.

“Aunt Jane,” she said, after she had put the text on the housekeeper's table, and demanded her admiration, “the frame, you

know, should suit the text. I wonder if papa will let me have one made to order, because I *know* I never can find one to please me."

"I dare say he will, Rhoda, if you are not too extravagant."

Rhoda did not make any remark, but sat cross-legged, like a Turk, on the floor, eying the text, and rocking herself backwards and forwards with a hand on each foot.

"Put it in black walnut," suggested Aunt Jane.

"That would be like giving those sweet lilies a mourning robe. No, I've an idea, I believe, and the next thing is papa."

Papa came in due time as the day was closing. Rhoda showed her present, and then asked if she might order a frame.

"What does my daughter think would make an appropriate frame?" said the indul-

gent father, smoothing back the tumbled hair from the pure brow.

Rhoda sat down in front of the open grate, with the picture on her knee. The firelight danced and flickered on the bright, interested face, and upon the text where the little flowers seemed to nod on their stems.

"I think," she said slowly, "that it should have a broad band of scarlet velvet around it, edged on each side with the narrowest gold beading that can be found; just enough to finish it."

"Bravo, little girl! you have your mamma's taste," said the father, gently; and after a moment he added: "I think Aunt Lottie wished for a different frame, however."

Rhoda looked up with an expectant face.

"Did you think of the words, Rhoda? Aunt Lottie would like to have your own life a frame fit to surround them."

What did papa mean? Rhoda glanced at the words again with a new thought. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." "Does it mean that *I* must do it," she thought, surprised. "I'd like to do something for Jesus, but I cannot see how I can bear anybody's burden; that would be so funny, for I do not know anybody who has a burden. The next thing is to know how, for I would not like to be a black-walnut frame for the beautiful words."

Thinking did not seem to do any good, and brother Will was no help, for he glanced at the text when he came in and said it was "just like Aunt Lottie."

"Do you mean the words or the painting, Will?" asked Rhoda, soberly.

"I don't know any thing about the words," said Will, flushing; "I'm not a burden-bearer."

Rhoda looked serious, and came to the table with an undecided air, which was unusual. "I don't believe I ever can be a frame for it," she thought.

Mr. Pine, of the firm of Pine & Gilding, looked amused as Rhoda presented herself at the counter of his large picture-store the next morning.

"Mr. Pine, I wish a frame for this picture," she said, unrolling it; "and I have come to order one made."

Mr. Pine took up the pasteboard, and looked at it critically, reading the words slowly: Rhoda wished he wouldn't. "That is very skilful workmanship," he said; "but to obey the command is rather more difficult; perhaps I have a frame which will suit you."

"No, sir, I do not think you have," said Rhoda, so decidedly that Mr. Pine smiled, and she proceeded to describe the one she desired.

"A very pretty design," he said. "I will see that your frame is made immediately. The crimson velvet will relieve the white and green, while the gold beading will serve to finish the whole. We can have it ready for you on Friday."

Rhoda turned away satisfied, and went out to the little phaeton, which was waiting before the door. Between the store and the carriage, however, an accident had happened. A very small boy was on his way to school, with a slate and a bundle of books large enough to make any mother's heart ache. As he came opposite the store the sight of the pretty little phaeton, drawn by a black pony, standing at the curb, made him pause. As he looked, some one coming in an opposite direction ran against him, the bundle of books tumbled to the ground, and the slate, which fell with them, was dashed to pieces

on the ground. The little fellow looked at them ruefully, and then his lip quivered and his eyes filled with tears.

Rhoda saw the accident, and her face was the picture of silent sympathy as she stood on the step and looked towards the little boy.

"Never mind, little boy," she said, hastening to him, and helping him to collect his books. "Go and buy another slate."

"I can't," sobbed the child; "mammy said she had no more money for books, and the slate was the last thing she could buy for me."

This was perplexing. Rhoda's hand went into the pocket of her jacket, but it was of no use; her purse was at home, and she knew that even if it had been in the blue jacket it held a small amount of cash. She tried to comfort him, however, and was

brushing the dust away from his clothes with her handkerchief when a voice near her said :

“ Why, Rhoda, what are you doing ? ”

She looked up, and her face brightened as she saw her brother Will.

“ Ah, Will ! ” she said, “ this poor little boy has broken his slate, and I have left my purse at home ; please give me ten cents ; he says that will buy a new one. ”

“ Rhoda, what have you to do with this child ? ” said Will, annoyed ; “ you are attracting the attention of the people who are passing. Do, I pray you, get into the phaeton, and go home. ”

“ But, Will, ” she persisted, “ the poor little child can't afford another slate ; what will he do ? ”

“ I don't know, and I don't care, Rhoda. Get into the phaeton. I'm waiting to help you. Do let the child alone. ”

Rhoda suddenly seemed to change her mind, and, leaving the boy, put her foot on the step of the phaeton.

“Give me ten cents, Will,” she said, laughing, “and I’ll go away directly.”

Will, who disliked the public notice she had called to herself, gave her the money. She tossed it to the little boy, whose face brightened. “Go, buy another slate,” she called after him, as he started away; and with a laughing “Thank you, brother Will,” she sprang into the low-seated basket carriage and drove away.

Friday came, and with it the picture in its new frame. It suited Rhoda’s taste, and she superintended the hanging of it in her own sunny corner of the breakfast-room. Aunt Jane was called in to see it, and approved.

“It isn’t an easy thing to do,” she said, reflecting, with her hand on her hip.

"No, it was rather difficult to hang, Jones said," replied Rhoda.

"I don't mean *that*," said Aunt Jane, "but the burden-bearing part. It keeps one always on the stretch to take care of other people's aches and pains, either of mind or body. There is a burden in the little house which I should not care to bear. We can sometimes ease it a little, and for Christ's sake it is well worth the trouble.— Yes, Susan," answering a call in the same breath, "I'll be there in a minute;" and Aunt Jane bustled away with a firm, quick step, and a face full of business.

Rhoda sat down in her little study chair and looked up at the words. "Other people's aches and pains: does it mean *that*?" she said to herself. "Oh! I'm sure I cannot bear my own aches, not to speak of those of other people. Dear me, I wonder what fulfil

is. I'm sure I would like to help the Lord if I could. I wonder if Aunt Lottie meant to puzzle me."

"Rhoda," said Aunt Jane, again at her side, "go upstairs and put on a clean dress; the minister is coming to tea. Any of the fresh ones will do; sometimes I think cleanliness and godliness go together. If you are clean you are very apt to be good."

Rhoda went upstairs and dressed herself, thinking all the while of the text. "I never bore anybody's burden in my life," she said despairingly, "and I don't know how."

"And how is Rhoda?" said the minister, coming to sit down on the sofa by her side after tea was over; "and why is she so silent this evening? Alfred begged to come with me to-night, for he said he had not seen Rhoda 'in an age.' Why have you not been to the parsonage?"

“I don't know, sir,” said Rhoda, soberly; “I guess I've been busy.”

Dr. Dana smiled. “What is the result of the business?” said he, kindly, for whenever he saw the little motherless one he felt drawn towards her, for he thought of his own flock, and wondered how they would thrive without a mother's care. “Have you any thing new to show me?” he asked.

“Yes, I have,” she replied suddenly, a new thought occurring to her. “Come here, please, and I'll show you.” She led him to the “sunny corner,” and, lighting the gas, turned it full upon the text. “There!” she said, in her abrupt fashion; “it's pretty, but I do not know how, I'm sure.” She sighed, and sank down into the little chair. Dr. Dana put his hand softly upon the brown locks, and there was a tender expression in his face as he looked down upon her.

“It is very pretty,” he said, as if half to himself; “and the frame is well chosen, and I know by the position of the picture that the sun shines upon it all day. When one is hands for the feeble, feet for the lame, sight for the blind, tender words for the suffering, help for the weak, joy for those who are in happiness, and tears for those who are in trouble, they are Christ’s burden-bearers, and they are like their Master, who ‘bore our griefs and carried our sorrows:’ and the rays of the Sun of Righteousness shine always about such as the sunbeams about your picture, and so they fulfil — make perfect — Christ’s law. I saw a little girl only a few mornings ago who was bearing the burden of a poor little boy who had dropped and broken his slate. She carried the burden amid some laughter, but it was borne bravely too.”

Rhoda had been listening intently, but she started up at this. "Dr. Dana, that was nothing," she said excitedly. "Why, I *liked* to do that!"

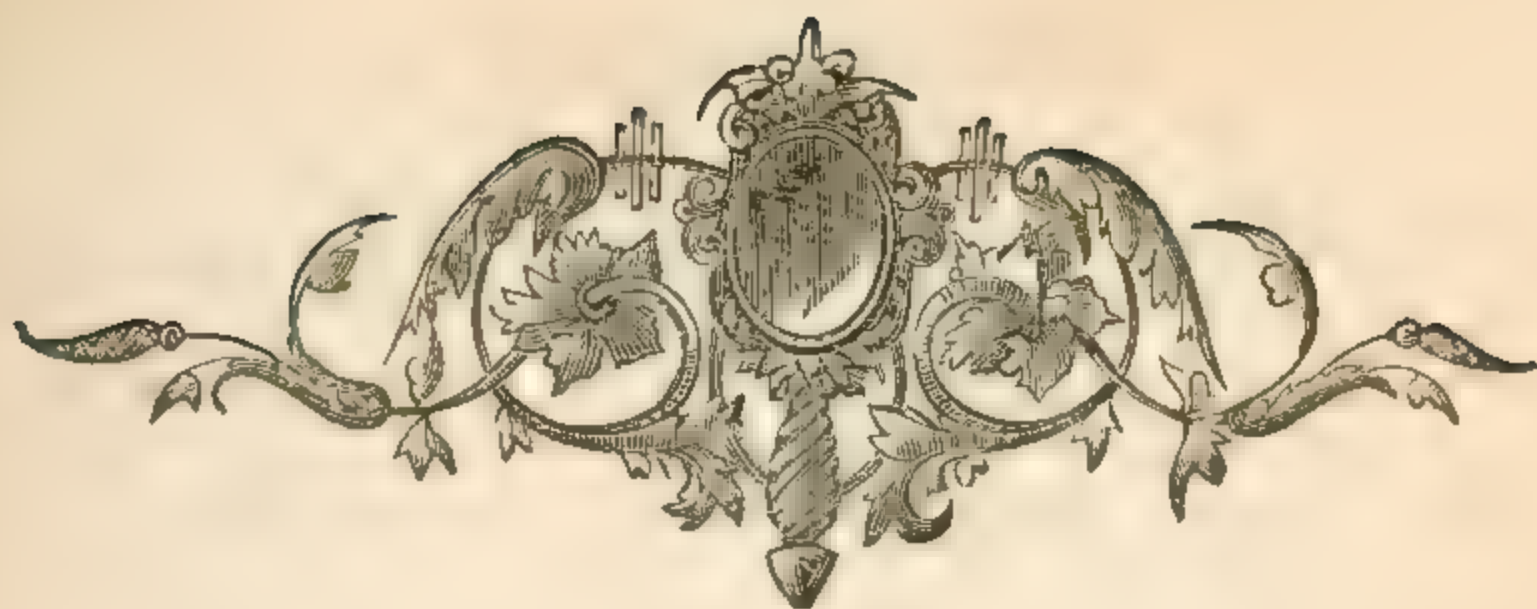
Nevertheless, it was easing the burden, and helping to fulfil. It is often the most pleasant thing in the world to do. Once there was a maiden lady, who lived by herself in a house which stood apart from all the rest of the dwellings in a little manufacturing town. She had just enough money to live on, and none to give away. She thought it was selfish to use all for herself, and so she determined to save. In order to do this, she had to deny herself something, so she gave up eating sugar and drinking tea and coffee. She also gave up butter. It seemed difficult at first, but it soon became easy. She laid the price of the articles away, and for years it accumulated. The people called her a

stingy, rich old maid, and all hated her. By and by, there was a scarcity of work in the town. The factories stopped, and the money was all spent. There were people with hunger in their faces, and wild eyes of despair were to be seen throughout the town. Just then, there came rolling into the depot a train of cars loaded with barrels of flour and meal, and the stingy, rich old maid, with her own hands, knocked off the heads of the barrels and gave to the starving people. They fell at her feet and blessed her; they reached out and clutched the bags of flour with grateful tears. They called upon God to look down upon her, and never cause a cloud to cast its shadow on her life. They begged to be forgiven for all their unkindness, and they strewed the path to her house with flowers.

“It was only tea and coffee, and sugar and

butter," she said to herself, as she saw the crowd disperse, "and I do not care for them at all. I am so glad they are not hungry any more."

Dr. Dana left Rhoda and returned to her father, who was sitting on the piazza. Presently they came in, for the evening was chilly. Rhoda had drawn her chair to the fire, and was looking down into the glowing coals. She only moved to say good-night to Dr. Dana when he went, and almost immediately afterwards sought her room. She lay awake, thinking of all she had heard, until the long lashes fell over the eyes still wet with the tears which the story had called forth. In her mind she saw the hungry faces, the longing eyes, and heard the blessings that were uttered. Finally, they all became blended in one refrain,—"Tea and sugar, and coffee and butter; and I do not care for them at all."



CHAPTER II.

LAME FLOY.

“Content to fill a little space
If Thou be glorified.”



THE place that Aunt Jane called “the little house” was a low wooden cottage, old and weather-beaten, which stood just at the back of Rhoda’s home. In it lived a shoemaker, his wife, and two children — a rough boy and a slender, delicate, crippled girl, who sat, hour after hour and day after day, by a window which looked out upon Mr. Rushton’s handsome residence. The chair in which she sat had arms, and upon these was fastened a piece of board, which served as a sort of

table for the cripple. Here was placed her work, sewing or fine knitting, and she left it only when it was necessary for her to go to her meals, when she would hobble painfully into the kitchen with the aid of her crutches. When she was weary, which, alas! was very, very often, she would lean back in the chair and try to forget her brother's surly tones or her father's rough talk, and, looking out upon the tall stone house, try to imagine what was within. She frequently saw Rhoda either on the piazza or at one of the low windows, and when she felt well, Rhoda's smiles and quick movements pleased her; at other times, she sat watching the graceful motions and heard the ringing laughter with a feeling of bitterness; and then walking seemed to her more difficult than usual, and the confusion of the little house and the close air of the small rooms more apparent.

From the "grand folks," as they termed the inmates of Mr. Rushton's house, came frequently offerings of fruit or some palatable dish, for Aunt Jane had a kind heart. These were received with many thanks; and perhaps it was owing to them that Rhoda was looked upon more often in a kindly way than otherwise.

The poor cripple — Florence — had a nature which could have enjoyed far higher and better surrounding than fell to her share, and in whose mind a love of what is beautiful and good was as well developed as in many of those who have grown up among such things. There was a strange, wistful, waiting look in her eyes, as if she knew there must be something higher than her daily life, and she half imagined sometimes, when she saw Rhoda's face, that it was in the life over the way. She could read and write, so

when she obtained a book her mind devoured it greedily, and God often sent her great dew-drops of comfort in this way. Thus she sat, longing and longing until one day seemed merged into the next, and all of them alike; and her soul hungered, and was not satisfied.

One morning she sat thus, doing nothing; her hand resting on the low window-sill, her head on the cushion of the chair, and her eyes closed. A shadow passed across her vision, and she smelled something so sweet that it caused her to open her eyes, and she saw directly outside the window the form of Rhoda Rushton holding a bouquet of roses and purple heliotrope in her hand. Rhoda laughed at the lame girl's expression of pleasure. "Are they not pretty?" she said; and, raising herself on tip-toe, she laid them upon the table.

Florence lifted them almost greedily. "Are they for me?" she exclaimed. "Oh! how sweet!"

"Yes," said Rhoda, "and the place they came from is my room, where they have been getting ready to bloom for you this ever so long. There are or will be more when these have withered. How do you do, this morning?" The question was put as if Rhoda had been accustomed to come and see her every morning; and the delicate feeling that prompted it made the girl reply, "I am as well as usual, thank you." But it also recalled her to herself, and her face clouded. Rhoda's quick eye saw it, and she hastened to speak.

"What work are you doing?" she asked, glancing at the table. "I often see you at your needle-work."

Florence held up a piece of very sim-

ple tatting. "I make it to sell," she said slowly.

"Do you?" replied Rhoda; "how pleasant! I knew a beautiful old lady once who made tatting to sell, so that she could have money to give to the poor. She taught me such a pretty pattern. Shall I show you?"

Without waiting for a reply, she took the shuttle, and, working and talking at the same time, her fingers flew in and out, until she had fashioned a delicate web-work, which made Florence's eyes shine. Rhoda said a word now and then about the stitches, so that when the wheel was finished Florence knew how to make one, and perceived not that she had been taught.

"There!" said Rhoda; "now I must go. If you want another pattern before I see you again, throw a little roll of soft paper up against that third window where the blue curtain hangs, and I will come over."

“Is that your room?” asked Florence;
“and, if you please, what is your name?”

“No, it is the breakfast-room, where I sit almost all the time, and my name is Rhoda. Yours is Florence, I know, for I have heard your brother call to you. I think Floy is prettier, and I am going to call you Floy. It sounds like flowers in the woods, you know.”

“Thank you,” said Florence, while her eyes filled, she knew not why. “Please come again.”

Rhoda nodded, promised, and was off. Floy’s eyes followed her wistfully, and then she turned her eyes upon her flowers and her little wheel of tatting. No danger now of a dull day. She did not even remember that a storm was hanging on the horizon, or that onions were cooking in the next room. Her mother looked at the flowers, and was pleased, because it made her child’s face

bright. Floy had always thought it small work to make tatting; but to-day the memory of the little fingers that flew so fast, and the beautiful old lady who worked for money, made a little halo around the work. The fatigue of body was far less to-day, because a bright girl with a command in her heart had carried away part of the burden.

Rhoda was on her way to school. When she returned in the afternoon, she went into the breakfast-room, and, taking off her hat, sat down in a chair to rest. She sat some time, wondering "where everybody was," and then thought to go and see. She went softly into Aunt Jane's room, and found her on the lounge, and there was a suspicious smell of camphor in the room.

"Why, Aunt Jane, what is the matter?" asked Rhoda, softly.

"Sick headache," answered Aunt Jane,

faintly; "and I don't know how your papa will get his supper, for it's cook's day out, and the ungrateful thing has gone. I've taken a dose of salts and submitted, but I feel as though I should fly."

Rhoda stood still and considered. It was her afternoon out too, and she had promised herself a walk down to the parsonage; but never mind.

"Lie still, Aunt Jane," she said. "I'll attend to the supper. I will make an oyster stew, and send out for some warm rolls. There is plenty of cake in the house. Now I will bathe your head until it is time to cook the oysters."

Aunt Jane settled back with a sigh of relief as well as pain, and the gentle fingers which pressed the wet cloth upon her head were so soothing that the old lady fell asleep, and Rhoda cautiously crept from the room. She

had had no lunch, but she had not time to think of that now. She found a big apron, consulted the clock, and, finding it was time for her work, went into the kitchen. An hour afterwards, when the bell rang for supper, the father and brother walked in, and found a very palatable meal awaiting them, and Rhoda sitting demurely at the head of the table. A mother would have noticed the flushed face and worried look, but papa saw only his little girl in an unusual place.

“Where is Aunt Jane?” he asked.

“She is ill to-night, papa, and I asked her to lie still.”

Papa was satisfied, and proceeded to dish the oysters. “Will,” said he, “have you seen Dr. Thompson lately?”

“No,” replied Will; “I never see him.”

“I met him to-day, and I never saw a man so worn down. He buries himself in

his books, and in the preparation of that "Work" does the duty of three men. I absolutely pity him. His room, to which he carried me to show me the progress in his task, is a perfect den; one can scarcely step for fear of crushing some huge volume. I never knew a place that needed a woman's hand as much as that room. These oysters are very good."

"Yes, unusually good," replied Will; "cook must have improved."

Jones, the waiter, was very fond of Rhoda, and as she was silent when the speech was made, he thought it a great pity that her good deeds should go unrewarded. "If you please, sir," said he, "Miss Rhoda made that stew herself, sir."

"Rhoda!" exclaimed her father, "I did not suppose you knew an oyster from a cod-fish. Where is the cook?"

"It's her day out, sir, and she was unwilling to give it up when she found Aunt Jane was ill. I did not find it much trouble to help Jones get supper."

"You're worth half a dozen cooks," said her brother, "and I'll reward you by taking you with me to-night." He held up two tickets, and while Rhoda's eyes brightened, the father looked a little anxious, but said nothing. "Will you go with me?" asked the brother.

"Oh! yes, thank you," said Rhoda.

"What! without seeing the tickets?"

"Yes, of course. I know you will take me to see something good. You always do."

Good in her dictionary and in his meant two different things, and he knew it. The tickets in his hand were admissions to a very amusing but very worthless burlesque opera. He knew that Rhoda would not consider *that*

good. With a sudden change of mind he returned the tickets to his pocket, and said: "Professor Rider's great singing school holds a jubilee concert to-night, and, as most of the singers are of your age, I thought you might like to hear it."

Mr. Rushton looked gratified. "I know you will enjoy it, Rhoda," he said.

She looked very much pleased, and as the meal was ended sprang from her chair, and was hastening upstairs when a sudden thought stopped her.

"Jones," she said, "I will help you with the dishes. We will wash them quickly."

"No, indeed, Miss Rhoda," said Jones, indignantly. "I should be a worthless nigger if I let you help me 'stead o' goin' to de concertum. Dis chile clar em off in no time."

Rhoda thanked him, and ran off to Aunt

Jane, who was sitting up in her great chair. "Of course I can spare you, child," she said, in answer to Rhoda's question. "You are a good girl, and deserve to go."

"If this is bearing burdens, I like it," said Rhoda to herself, as she slipped her arms into her fur jacket. Perhaps Will regretted his offer, and perhaps he did not. It did not appear, however, and he did his best to render the evening pleasant to his little sister, and he succeeded well. He met one or two of his friends, who asked him if he was governess, and that annoyed him. But a certain Miss Morrison was at the concert, and her eyes brightened when she saw him. She was inwardly glad when they came and sat near her; and although Rhoda was a little awed by the tall, proud, young lady, with flashing eyes, as she called her, she found her very pleasant. Altogether, it was

very enjoyable, and her father listened to her rapturous account of it with a smile.

The next morning, however, when she opened her eyes, her first thought was not of the concert, but of the old doctor of whom her father had spoken the night before. Could she not, in some way, cheer his lonely life? She wondered whether he liked girls, and if he would scold her if she went to see him. He knew her well, for he frequently came to dinner with her father. Would it be bold to go and call upon him?

“Papa,” she said timidly, coming up to his side after breakfast, and placing her hand on his knee, “do you think Dr. Thompson would be glad to see me if I should go there?”

“Yes, indeed, Rhoda. I think he would be highly delighted. Why? What do you wish to know out of his big books?”

“Nothing, sir; but you said he was a lonely old man, and needed a woman about. I’m not a woman, I know, papa, but I’m growing fast, and I think perhaps I can cheer him.”

“Good child! Go and try, but do not wear yourself out, my blessing.” Papa’s hand was laid caressingly on the brown locks as he resumed the reading of his morning paper.

It was Saturday, and Rhoda knew that she must sit at the piano two hours before she was at liberty to go. She did not enjoy practising; very few girls do, especially when somebody’s “Method” is to be the theme. Rhoda lingered in the breakfast-room, and looked out of the window at the passengers on the street until the clock warned her that if she did not commence soon the morning would be spent and her errand unaccom-

plished. At last, she took her seat at the piano with a sigh, and wondered whether she was not bearing a burden on her own account. The morning's task, however, was not a "Method," but a beautiful melody, which was pleasant even to practise. By keeping her eyes steadfastly away from the clock, the time passed sooner than she was aware; and when the hour struck at last she left the piano with a sense of duty done.

When she was actually in the street, she began to wonder what the old doctor would think of her for intruding upon him, and it required a little perseverance to keep her feet in the direction of the doctor's boarding-house, instead of turning towards the parsonage.

Finally, however, she arrived, and inquired of the servant who opened the door the way to the doctor's room.

“Up two flights, first door on the right,” said the girl, and left her to find her way.

Rhoda timidly mounted the stairs and knocked at the doctor's door.





CHAPTER III.

WORK DONE FOR GOD.

“Our daily burdens we can meekly take
With this sweet motive — for our Saviour’s sake.”



HE was answered by a heavy step across the floor, and the door was opened by Doctor Thompson himself; his hair was standing on end all over his head, and he had a pen behind his ear. He peered at her a full minute through half-closed eyes before he fully decided what sort of a visitor he had.

“Ah!” said he, at last. “Rushton’s daughter. Come in.”

Rhoda walked within the door, stepped over volumes four and five of the “Encyclopædia Britannica,” and so reached a chair.

“Sit down,” said the doctor, following her and looking at her with no little curiosity.

“I came to see you a little while,” said Rhoda, timidly. “Papa said he thought you would be glad to have me come. I would like to look about among your big books while you write, and I can move like a mouse, and I will not touch any thing I should not.”

The doctor smiled, and looked at her again. He seemed satisfied with the bright, open face, and said, “There are pictures in the large portfolios under the bookcase, but you must not make a noise or let a book fall.”

He returned to his writing, and Rhoda sat still for some minutes, looking about. The room was literally crammed with books. The cases which occupied the four walls were filled to overflowing, and the volumes which

could find no place on the shelves were piled on the floor and tables. The room was cold, for it was a keen November day, and the fire which had been built in the grate had been allowed to die down. The doctor had wrapped a scarf around his neck to keep himself warm. There was a curious machine in one corner of the room, which Rhoda tried in vain to understand, but which she found afterwards to be a gymnastic apparatus, intended to be used as an exercise when the doctor was weary with long sitting. Dust lay thick upon every thing. Rhoda saw all this, and then softly laying aside her fur hat and jacket, knelt down by the grate in order to mend the fire. She moved very softly, placing the lumps of coal in the grate with her fingers, and raking the ashes down with a splinter of wood. Soon she had the satisfaction of seeing the flames start up

among the coals, and so she swept the fender and arose to her feet. The doctor was still hard at work, writing very fast, or consulting some of the numerous books which lay around him. He did not see what she had been doing; but as it became warmer in the room he untied his scarf and ceased to rub his hands together when he laid down his pen. Rhoda did not dare to touch the books further than to place those which were lying singly about the floor in piles near the cases. This left quite an open space in the middle of the room. After this was done she gave a sigh of satisfaction, and sought the portfolio of pictures in the corner. She looked them over very quietly, but now and then she could hear the doctor say, "What a trouble! How vexatious to have to stop for this!" She found at last that he was searching in huge volumes for items of information, and as he

seemed to have a paper of reference she wondered if she could not search for him.

She came softly up to the table and said, "Doctor, can I look out some of those for you?" He started around in his chair and looked at her.

"I don't know," he said; "you might try. It would be a great help to me if you could. Here, take this and this," pulling two huge volumes to the corner of the table and pushing a score of others away to make room for them. "Take that high chair, and sit down at the table. Here is the paper of references. Commence at the top and look out the first one and read it to me. Then find the next, and when I say 'ready,' read it. Take the pencil, and cross off the references as fast as you find them. Now, 'ready.'"

Rhoda found the first and read it clearly and distinctly. The doctor seemed satisfied,

and bent over his paper. In a few moments he was ready for the next one, and as he looked round he noticed Rhoda's pencil, following the words.

"My child," said the doctor, "on no account let your pencil come near the book. The point might touch the page, and books are very valuable, and should be handled carefully. Now, read."

A little frightened by the rebuke, she read, wondering what it all meant. The doctor asked her to write what she had read on a piece of paper, and after she had done so, while she was looking out another reference, he examined the writing, telling her she did not dot her i's, and that was very important. However, this did not deter him from keeping her hard at work reading and writing until near one o'clock.

She paused then, and said, "I am sorry

doctor, but I must go home now. Aunt Phebe told me to come back to lunch."

"Why!" exclaimed the doctor, "is it lunch time, and I've been working you until your cheeks are flushed and your eyes too bright? I must ask you to take lunch with me; but then, dear! dear! I've only dry bread and crackers, and the meal below stairs will not be ready for an hour. Ah! did you build that fire? That's famous, and you've cleared quite a space."

The doctor sat down by the bright fire and called Rhoda to him. He talked to her some time, seemingly pleased with her answers. At length he said, "You are a busy little woman; who told you to come and see me? I'm a poor amusement for Saturday morning. You are worth something too. Tell your mamma she has trained you well."

“Dear mamma is not here now,” said Rhoda softly. She did not say “poor mamma,” as so many do, as if the change of earth for Heaven was to become poor.

“How could I be such a blunderer,” said the doctor to himself. “Your name is Rhoda, I remember,” he said aloud; “now, Rhoda, I should be glad to see you in my den whenever you choose to come. I have never given that invitation to any one before.”

Rhoda looked pleased, and thanked him. Then she put on her jacket and hat, and having shaken hands with the good doctor, left him.

He was looking after her regretfully, as she closed the door. “I wonder if it has become cloudy,” he said to himself, and went and pulled the shade to the top of the window.

As Rhoda reached home, and ran into

the side gate and up the back piazza steps, she saw a wistful face looking at her from the doorstep of the little house. Floy was leaning on her crutches and watching the quick steps of the happy girl.

Rhoda turned and was at her side in a moment.

“Are you better to-day?” she asked.

“No,” replied Floy; “but I am so weary of sitting. I heard your beautiful music this morning, and it helped me to endure those two hours.” Rhoda thought of the hated practice-time, and if even that could help somebody.

“Does not your support assist you much?” said Rhoda, touching the rude crutch.

Floy flushed. It was a sore subject to her, but Rhoda had called it support instead of the dreaded word, and did not seem to ask from mere curiosity.

“Not much,” she replied; “the doctor says I should not use it, but I cannot always sit still. He wished me to have a shoe made with supports and a very thick sole; he thought I might walk quite easily with that, but it costs too much money, so I try to hobble about with this, but it hurts my back.”

“I should think you might learn to love it,” said Rhoda, “for it is your most constant and faithful companion. You know one sometimes loves even things which are not alive. I love a Bible text I have more than almost any thing I possess.”

Floy smiled faintly. “Perhaps so,” she said, “for the dog loves best the master who beats him; but I am afraid I do not look at things with your eyes.”

“There are bright days, are there not?” asked Rhoda.

“Yes,” she returned hopelessly, “but the sun always sets when the day is past.”

“Ah! yes,” said Rhoda, determined to rouse her out of the melancholy into which she had fallen; “and then the stars come out, and the moon, to tell us of more brightness to-morrow. The stars always seem to me to say, ‘Do not be afraid.’ See! the sun is lighting us; he will be with you again.”

She went away, and Floy thought of her in her happy home, with every thing around her to make life pleasant. No, not quite. Floy, when tired of standing by the open door, turned to creep slowly back to her place, and her mother’s arm was put around her tenderly, her mother’s hand arranged the pillows at her back, and her mother’s voice cheered her. Rhoda, with a thousand plans for fulfilling her text all in her mind at

once, came into the beautiful house and stood alone by the breakfast-room fire, with her hands folded together in front of her. She longed for a mother, that she might lay her head in her lap and ask her advice, and tell her all her projects. She felt so *left*, there was no one to share her interests or rejoice with her over her burdens. She looked very grave, and a tear started. The doctor or Floy would not have known her at that minute. She sat down presently, and would have become very, very lonely and sad, had not her eye fallen upon the text. "I must not forget my duty," she said to herself. "I must not have a burden if I have those of others to bear. I wonder how I can get a thick-soled shoe for Floy." This thought occupied her so long that presently her father was there, and Will; and she found she had fallen asleep in the breakfast-room,

and that it was evening, and the lamps were lighted.

“What has tired you to this extent?” asked her father, bending over her.

“Nothing, papa,” she replied; “only I was tired of being alone, and so fell asleep.”

Papa sighed, and looked very grave as he seated himself at the tea-table.

They all went to church the next morning,—to the old church, four miles from town, which Mr. Rushton had attended since he was a boy, and in the yard of which Rhoda’s mamma slept. They almost always preferred the distant church, although it involved a ride in the carriage. Rhoda liked it, first, for its own sake, because she felt so peaceful there; and secondly, because they always dined with her Aunt Lottie, who lived in a stone cottage near the church. She was always sure of a hearty welcome,

and the stone cottage was like a home with a mother in it.

On the particular Sunday of which we are to share, all these things seemed even more pleasant than usual. Dr. Dana, who lived in town, and preached at the church, was a kind, simple-hearted man, and Rhoda always understood him. Her aunt and her little son Ally were in the pew in front of Rhoda and her father. When the service was over Rhoda joined them, and Ally, who had been steadily looking at her over the back of the pew, claimed her now, and insisted that she should walk with him "all alone." His mother, after a little coaxing, allowed him to do as he wished; and Rhoda, although she would much have preferred a talk with her aunt, let him lead her away.

"I want to tell you something, Cousin Rhoda," he said, when they had gone so far

in advance of the father and aunt that his words would not be heard. "It's an awful thing to say; but, Rhoda, I tell you, upon my honor, I hate Sunday."

It was said with such a mixture of spite and an idea that it was and must remain a profound secret that he was guilty of such a feeling, and the expression of it came so gravely from the little lips, that Rhoda laughed almost until the tears came.

"Oh! hush, do," said Ally. "It's an awful thing to hate Sunday. I went out into the barn, and told the cows I hated it, and they looked at me with their great, sober eyes until I cried, and told them I was sorry, and now you laugh."

"No, Ally, dear," said Rhoda, seeing how distressed he was. "I only laughed at your way of telling it; and I know there is no need of hating Sunday."

“That’s because you’re a girl, and don’t mind behaving. I have to be so good on Sunday that it tires me almost to death.”

“I’ll tell you what we will do,” said Rhoda; “after dinner we will go up in auntie’s sewing-room out of the way, and I believe you’ll enjoy one-half of your Sunday.”

Ally was well satisfied, and kept close to Rhoda after they reached the house. She did not allow herself to forget him, but told him about the poor little boy who broke his slate, and other interesting matters.

After dinner he was very restless, and not well pleased when Rhoda stopped on her way upstairs for a slate and pencil from the library. When they were called, two hours afterwards, she came out of the little sewing-room, holding the bright-faced little boy by the hand.

"Where have you been?" asked Aunt Patty, in surprise.

"Now, mamma," said Ally, gravely, "you mustn't scold; we've been having a regular Sunday upstairs; oh! jolly, you know. All about Goliah, who marched so"—taking great strides across the hall—"and David, who carried a bag and took a stone out so"—diving his little hand into his jacket pocket. "I drew a picture of 'em on my slate. David beat Goliah all to pieces, because God loved David's folks, and meant to make him kill the giant. Rhoda says God helps us to fight the naughty thoughts and words, so I'm going to carry a sling and a stone all the time."

Aunt Patty bent and kissed Rhoda. "You are a dear, kind girl," she said.

"Wait, mamma," said Ally, pulling at her dress. "I want to tell you. Rhoda said I

was like a little lamb, and Jesus was the Shepherd, and I must tell Him about myself, just as the little lamb bleats for the shepherd to hear. Listen! I've learned the call:—

“ ‘ Only a little lamb,
But Thou dost care for me ;
In Thy great flock, dear Lord,
I ever safe shall be.’ ”

“ Isn't that pretty, mamma ? ”

“ Very sweet, indeed, dear,” replied mamma; and putting her arm about Rhoda, she led her into the parlor, and giving her a seat in the corner of the sofa, talked — as Rhoda always knew she would — of all Rhoda's interests and pleasures. The face which looked out of the carriage window as they returned was bright, and the tones in which Rhoda spoke cheerful and merry. She carried sunshine into her father's heart, and made the otherwise dull ride pleasant. Sunday even-

ing was a gloomy time at home. The father missed his wife more sorely than at other times, and was wont to be despondent and gloomy. Rhoda heard his sigh as he sat down by the lonely hearth, and she begged Will to come and sing with her. He came reluctantly, but the hymns and the singers roused the mourner, and he came to join them, until, hearing the clock strike, he started.

“Ten o’clock!” he exclaimed. “Why, I had no idea it was so late. Rhoda, my child, Will, my boy, you have made the evening very pleasant.”





CHAPTER IV.

FOR "LOVE'S SAKE."

"No thought of herself was in her head,
As she passed out at the end of the street,
And came to a rose-tree tall and red,
Drooping and faint with the summer heat.

"She ran to a brook that was flowing by;
She made of her two hands a nice round cup,
And washed the roots of the rose-tree high,
Till it lifted its languid blossoms up.

" 'O happy brook,' thought little Christel,
'You have done some good this summer's day;
You have made the flowers look fresh and well,'
Then she arose and went her way."

LILLIPUT LEVEE.



THE parsonage gate swung behind Rhoda, and clashed with a noise which was music to her ears. She had been putting off the longed-for visit to

the parsonage from day to day, until now there had come an afternoon when nothing seemed to be demanded of her. There were children of all ages at the parsonage, from little Dick the baby boy, to Alfred the grave, steady, eldest son. Girls and boys were scattered between; and as Rhoda came to the door, two of the flock ran out to meet her.

"Ah! Rhoda, I've not seen you for a long time," said one.

"We're just going to have a great game in the attic," said another. "Father has put us up a hammock; we have carried the little organ up there, and Alfred has taken his printing-press and games. You are just in time."

"I'll come," said Rhoda, her girl-heart beating with the pleasure in store. "But first, where is Mrs. Dana? I must speak to her."

“Mamma’s in here,” said Louise, stopping at the nursery door. “You go in and see her, and then come up; we’ll go and get every thing ready.”

Rhoda opened the nursery door and went in. Mrs. Dana sat in a rocking-chair by the side of the fire, with little Dick in her arms, and Bessie, a wee girl of two years, on a stool by her side. She looked weary and overburdened, this mother of twelve children; and the smile with which she received Rhoda was almost forced, although she was glad to see the quiet little girl whom her children loved.

“I came to speak to you before going upstairs, Mrs. Dana,” she said. “Aunt Jane sent a message of love, and this little cup of jelly, with some cake she has just made. She said they were so good that she could not help sharing them with you. Will you not

let me take some out for you, and then hold little Dick while you enjoy it?"

"It will be too much trouble for you, I'm afraid," said Mrs. Dana, half yielding.

Rhoda stifled the voice which was saying to her, "You are losing some fun upstairs," and, drawing a stand near Mrs. Dana, she spread the tempting little lunch upon it. Then she gently lifted Dick from his mother's arms; he yielded readily, for she often petted the smiling baby, and he liked her.

Mrs. Dana, with a little sigh and a "How good you are, dear," gave up the baby and turned to her lunch. She had tasted nothing since morning, and it was very tempting. Bessie wished to taste, and clung about her mother; but Rhoda attracted her by some bright candies drawn from her pocket, and, soothing little Dick on her lap, talked to Bes-

sie. The voices upstairs were merry enough. Shouts of laughter were borne to her ears, and the tones of the little organ were distinctly heard. She longed to be up there; it was very hard to sit still. "Why did you offer?" said the voice within. The tired face opposite to her was answer enough, but it did not silence the joyous feet overhead.

To still her heart, and stop the longing, Rhoda began to talk to Mrs. Dana about the lame girl Floy, and then she bethought herself to ask her how the desired shoe could be obtained.

"I know papa would buy it if I asked him," she went on, when she had finished her recital, "but that would not be doing it myself, or putting myself to any trouble about it; besides, I do not quite like to ask for so large a sum. I would like to earn it, but I do not know of a way."

Mrs. Dana did not, although she puzzled her brain for a good suggestion.

"There is one thing," said Rhoda slowly, "which I thought might answer. You know how much work Dr. Thompson has to do. I was there about a week ago, spending the forenoon. I hunted for references and wrote for him for some time. He said I was a help to him, and I wondered whether it would be a very bold thing to ask him to let me help him, say three afternoons in the week, and pay me for my work, so that I could earn the money for the shoes."

It was a very gentle look that Mrs. Dana turned towards the little speaker. "Dear child," she said, "it would be much more difficult than you imagine. You would tire, and when you have agreed to do it you will be obliged to continue."

"Yes," said Rhoda, eagerly; "but I've had

nothing much to bear so far, and it's the bearing of the burdens that is the fulfilling of the law. O Mrs. Dana, how many burdens Jesus bore, and how hard it must have been! Can I not bear one?"

Mrs. Dana did not reply for a moment. She pushed her chair back from her finished lunch, and coming over to Rhoda stooped and kissed her. "You make my own burdens lighter," she said. "There is no reason in the world why you should not ask Dr. Thompson if you desire. I am sure he wishes just such help, and I remember hearing him say he would pay any one who would work for him. I will take Dick now."

"No, Mrs. Dana. See! he is asleep; you are tired, I know, and Bessie will stay with me while you go and take a walk. You need it, I am sure. I will tell Bessie a beau-

tiful story. You will stay, will you not, Bessie ? ”

“ Stay wid Oda ? yes,” said the little one.

“ You tempt me again, Rhoda,” said Mrs. Dana, smiling. “ I’ve not been out since Sunday. A walk would be so good, but I know you are wanted upstairs. No, no ; it is not fair.”

“ Please, Mrs. Dana ! I know you want it, and the little ones will be so good with me.”

“ I don’t doubt that,” said Mrs. Dana ; and she slowly unfastened her collar, and then went away to change her dress and take a walk.

When the door was closed, Rhoda heard the tumult upstairs more plainly than ever. They were having some kind of a game, for she could hear low talking, and then a loud shout of laughter. How she longed to be there ! Her heart throbbed, and for a moment

or two she stopped in the middle of a story told to Bessie, because of a choking in the throat.

“Doo on,” said Bessie, “quick, hurry up;” so she went on and tried to forget. By and by the door opened softly, and a head was put in. Seeing Rhoda there, Louise advanced into the room. She was bundled in shawls, with an old bonnet on her head, and a long blue veil suspended from it. In her hand she carried an umbrella. “Come, Rhoda,” she said, “why don’t you come up? We are going across the continent to settle in the western part of Nevada. We have travelled ever so far, and last night the Indians attacked us. Oh! ’twas dreadful. Come up and help us.”

“No,” replied Rhoda; “your mamma has gone out for a walk, and I’m to stay until she comes back. It’s no matter.”

"That is a shame. Let the baby lie on the bed, and Bessie will stay without you. We are not allowed to have her upstairs for fear she will be hurt."

"Bessie not stay without Oda," said the child, commencing to cry. Little Dick stirred in his sleep. "No, Lou, dear, thank you," said Rhoda, with the tears in her eyes, as she hushed the baby. "If there is time after your mamma returns, I'll come up; not now. Hush, Bessie, I'm not going to leave you."

So the door closed after the western settler, and Bessie heaved a sigh of relief, and asked for another story.

Mrs. Dana was not absent long; but the November afternoons were short, and by the time she came in the sun was slanting long rays across the room, and the light clouds which were to escort the departing King of

Day were borrowing their colors for the occasion.

“Thank you, dear,” said Mrs. Dana, as she lifted the now awakened baby from her lap; “you have done me a great service. Now go upstairs.”

Rhoda went; the western settlers had reached their new home, and she was in time to help them set up housekeeping. Fifteen minutes were left before the sunset, and when every thing was settled, they sang, to the accompaniment of the almost worn-out little organ, a hymn to celebrate the safe arrival.

“If you had been here, Rhoda,” said Louise, “I’m sure the Indians would not have attacked us.”

Quiet, sober Alfred, the mother’s right-hand, came to help her, as she prepared to go. “It was so kind of you to stay with the

children while mother went to walk," he said, in a low tone. "They tell me there is skating on Watsatch Park. If you will go and try it to-morrow afternoon, I will come for you with pleasure."

Rhoda thanked him with a flush of pleasure, and accepted. He carried her little basket, containing the clean china that had held the lunch, to her own door, and there bade her good-night, and Rhoda shut the door after him with a face full of happiness.

"You look unusually well to-night, Agnes," said Dr. Dana to his wife from his seat at the other end of the table. "What has happened to please you?"

"Rhoda Rushton was here this afternoon, and brought me such a delicious lunch. She stayed with baby while I took a walk; she is such a dear child."

“ Yes,” chimed in Louise, “ and she missed our journey across the continent, which was such a pity. She is always doing something for somebody, and missing the fun.”

“ I know one thing,” said Fanny, “ she’s going skating on the pond at the park with a great boy named Alfred, to-morrow. Oh! wasn’t it fun to hear him ask her.”

Timid Alfred flushed, and replied: “ I wanted her to have some enjoyment.”

Dr. Dana’s hand was placed upon his son’s shoulder. “ Right, my boy,” said he; “ you and Rhoda are two good workers. You cannot do better than to help her frame her text. Do all you can for her; she has but few of your joyous times in her lonely home. If her bright face is any token, she is framing another text, — ‘ He that watereth shall be watered also himself. ’ ”

The following afternoon was as bright as

heart could wish, and cold enough to please any skater's heart. The two in whom we are interested set off early, and enjoyed an hour of sport before the greater part of the crowd arrived. Rhoda was dressed in fur cloak and hat, and looked like a little white squirrel as she glided over the ice. Her eyes sparkled, and she was full of the enjoyment of the time, and the thrill of life and health brought about by the swift motion and the stinging cold. Alfred was kind and attentive, and, what was better, a first-class skater. Once, while they were gliding up and down in a quiet part of the lake, she told him of that which lay nearest her heart,—lame Floy, and a shoe for her. He was pleased, and entered into her plan heartily.

"I'll tell you what I'll do for you," he said, when he had heard all there was to tell about Floy, "I'll make her a table to fit her

chair, if you'll take me there to measure the height."

"Oh! that will be so good," said Rhoda, "and it will please her so. Shall we stop there, going home?"

"Yes, if you think it would please her."

So it came to pass that the fun was shortened a little; and Alfred, instead of leaving her at her own door, went around the corner with her and stopped at the lame girl's window. Floy's eyes brightened. Rhoda introduced her companion, who spoke to the lame girl, and then rather timidly said:

"Rhoda tells me that you have but a frail excuse for a table, and I came to ask you to let me make you one to fit your chair."

He spoke as if the favor was conferred upon him, and the lame girl noticed it. "You are very good," she said, gaining courage, for

she had drawn back in shame at first. "Will you come in?"

They entered the low door, and walked across the dingy room into the one where Floy sat at the window. If they noticed the disorder and close smell of the outer room, they did not appear to do so; if the place was repulsive to children bred to order and refinement, their very culture made them silent; and although the lame girl looked sharply to see the glance of disgust which would have made her in her poor pride disdain their kindly help, she saw only kindness in their faces.

The little white-furred figure stood looking on highly interested while the measurements were made, and chatted with Floy, who answered admiringly. Alfred spoke and moved with the gentleness of a girl; and Floy, who had never seen into life like

theirs, watched the two with a quiet enjoyment which would be a comfort to her in many a lonely hour.

“ I’ll go right to work at it for you,” said Alfred, rising from his knee as he took the last measure, “ and bring it to you as soon as it is done. Now, Rhoda, we must be off.”

They stopped a moment at the window as they passed it again outside,— Rhoda to smile and promise to see her soon, and Alfred to lift his cap and bow. Floy watched with a pleased face the two as they reached the door of Mr. Rushton’s house; saw Alfred give Rhoda the skates he had carried, and lift his cap in precisely the same way he had performed that action a moment ago. She settled back in her chair, and looked out through the window into the rosy twilight. Life did not all pass by her; she had had a share in the afternoon’s pleasure of the young girl over

the way. As she thought it over, she almost concluded that it was she who had been skating on Watsatch Pond, and for her the skates had been carried, and the good-night said.

So Rhoda, out of her *pleasure* even, carried the burden of a longing heart.





CHAPTER V.

LETTING LIGHT SHINE.

“Thus to learn with pure endeavor
Good to do, and nothing say.”



It was very difficult for Rhoda to make up her mind to ask Dr. Thompson for work. In the first place, he would think that her former visit was only to show him what she could do, so that she might have a better opportunity of securing work from him. He would think she loved money for money's sake, and would therefore consider her selfish and miserly. She knew she was right, however; and, in her vocabulary, the “next thing was to obtain the work.”

The first afternoon she was at liberty she put on her hat, almost without stopping to think, went into the street, and walked quickly to the house of Dr. Thompson. He opened the door in answer to her knock, and actually smiled and rubbed his hands together with pleasure when he saw who it was.

“So you have come to see an old man again, have you?” he asked.

Rhoda shook hands with him, and thought to herself, “Ah! what will he say when I tell him my errand.” She sat down by the fire, and pulled off her gloves slowly. The doctor, who was not quite as busy as usual, took a chair near her, and looked ready to talk.

“I’ve come on business this time, Dr. Thompson,” said Rhoda gravely, her heart beating until she almost heard its throbbings.

“Business!” echoed the doctor, with an amused twinkle in his eyes, as he looked at

the little figure in his big chair, who talked of business. His face was not calculated to calm her any, he seemed to look down upon her from such a height. She gathered courage, however, and proceeded:

“I want money, sir, for a plan I have formed, and I came to ask if such work as I did the other day would be worth paying for, if I could come and look out words for you three afternoons in a week. I had no thought of it when I came the other day, but I have since formed a plan, and need money to carry it forward.”

The doctor looked at her sharply. “Little miser,” he thought to himself. “However, although I don’t like the spirit in a girl so young, I want the help, and why not have it from her as well as from anybody?”

“I am willing to try you,” said the doctor, in a grave tone, “but I can pay you but very

little. I am a poor man. Does any one know of your plan ? ”

“ Yes ; I asked Mrs. Dana about it, and she thinks it would be a good thing. How much could you give me, sir ? ”

He named a sum which told Rhoda, by a moment's mental multiplication, that she would have to work until the middle of March before she could obtain the amount which she knew was needful to purchase the shoe ; and now it was within a few days of December. She was a little dismayed, and her face bore evidences of it.

“ I employed some one at that price in the spring,” said the doctor. “ Of course, you are not obliged to accept. I wish I could offer more.”

“ It will do very well, sir,” replied Rhoda. “ I would like to try. When do you wish me to begin ? ”

“ You may come next week, if you like,” he said ; “ and remember one thing ; when any one agrees to work for payment, the person employed expects the work. I shall demand of you that you open that door at three o’clock on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, whether it rains, or snows, or hails, — whether there is company at home or not. I will arrange for you a place at the table, and when you come in you can go directly there without disturbing me.”

Rhoda caught her breath ; it was going to be hard work ; but her brave little heart told her not to fear.

“ Very well, sir,” she said quietly, and added, “ Can I do any thing for you to-day, sir ? ”

“ No, thank you,” he replied. “ But wait ; there is something, if you will be so kind.” He fumbled in his desk and brought out

some squares of cloth, which he had been trying to bind with pink tape, and had made a clumsy piece of work of it.

“I want these for covers for my manuscript,” he said; “and I’ve tried to bind them, and cannot. Wait, and I’ll bring you my thimble.”

Rhoda could hardly repress a smile; and when he brought the thimble, which a Brobdingnagian might easily have worn, she burst into a little ripple of laughter, which so infected the doctor that he laughed also.

“Ah! I see it is too large,” he said. “Well, you’ll have to sew without one.”

She went to work and soon stitched the binding on neatly and securely. The doctor looked at it with pleasure. “Thank you,” said he; “that is very nice. I will not keep you longer; but I shall expect you next week.”

On Friday, Rhoda was sitting among a number of school-girls gathered around the fire in the school-room at recess time. She had her spelling-book on her lap, and was rocking backwards and forwards with her hands pressed against her forehead, and her elbows on her knees, studying very diligently. The girls were talking and eating their lunch at the same time.

“Where do you go to Sunday-school this winter, Sue?” asked one of another.

Sue bit into her apple; and, after eating the mouthful, replied, “I go to the church on the corner of Spring and Union Streets, and my teacher is soft.”

“Soft?” said one. “What’s the matter with her?”

“Oh! she’s such a pious thing. She is not content with hearing the lesson, but must talk to us in a soft kind of way that makes me sick.”

The hands came down from the head, and Rhoda listened.

“What does she say, Sue?” asked the questioner.

Sue moved restlessly. “I don’t know; she says, ‘Dear girls, you must love Jesus; dear girls, I so wish you would learn to love Jesus.’” Agnes said these words in a mocking way, with a drawling voice, which made some of the group laugh, and which brought the blood throbbing into Rhoda’s face. Louise Dana, who was one of the listeners, looked grave.

“You’re a good actress, Sue,” said one, laughing.

“She says,” continued Sue, in the same drawling tone, “‘Dear girls, do give your hearts to Jesus while you are young. Death will come by and by. Dear girls, are you ready?’”

Rhoda's heart beat rapidly. "Shall I speak?" she thought. "It will bring the laugh upon me, and will do no good. Agnes is wrong; but I cannot set her right."

Just then, from the school below stairs, where the younger children were gathered, came the sound of a hymn which they were singing together; as Rhoda's ears caught the words, they seemed to come from the Spirit of God.

"Jesus bids us shine
With a pure, clear light,
Like a little candle
Burning in the night.
In the world is darkness,
So we must shine;
You in your small corner,
And I in mine."

"Why does she say all that?" asked one of the girls at that moment.

"I think," said Rhoda, speaking for the first time, "that she cannot help loving the

dear Saviour, and so she likes to speak of Him, just as we always talk of those whom we love best. We cannot forget the boundless love of the Lord our Saviour."

There was a dead silence, and all eyes were turned upon the girl "who had dared." Rhoda felt as if she was the centre of a circle, and around the outside were all these laughing girls.

"Pardon me, Miss Piety," said Sue, bowing mockingly; "I had no idea the softness extended to you, or I should not have made the remark."

"Sue Motford, I should think you had said enough for the present," said one of the group. "There is the Professor."

The bell struck, and the girls dispersed. The scholars were gathered in utter stillness in the great room. There was some delay in the order of exercises; and, while the girls

waited, the sounds of the hymn floated up again from the school below.

“Jesus bids us shine
First of all for Him ;
Well He sees and knows it,
If one light be dim.
He looks down from Heaven
To see us shine ;
You in your small corner,
And I in mine.”

There was not one of those who had stood in the group at recess but heard the words, and applied them to the gentle girl who had shone for her Saviour.

“When the children sang that,” said Louise Dana, two hours afterwards, as she stopped on the piazza steps to tell him about it, “it seemed to make a kind of halo all about Rhoda’s head, and there was not a girl who did not honor her.”

Alfred’s eyes brightened. “That was

good," said he. "She is brave; it is not easy to say such things, although it is what we all ought to do."

"Easy? I guess not. I felt just as she did, but I could not have said it if I had tried all night. I told her that the table was done, and she said she would stop going home and go with you if you were ready to take it."

A few minutes afterwards Rhoda came up, swinging her bag of books, and looking very happy.

"That is just right," she said, when he had shown her the table; "you have made it really beautiful. Shall we go to the cottage now?"

He consented, and they went off joyfully together, the boy with an added respect in his voice and manner, gathered from the incident just narrated. They came like two sunbeams into the cripple's room. The table

was in shape like a large lap-board — that arrangement which dress-makers use — only where that is flat, this had around the edge a raised strip to prevent articles from slipping off. It also had two legs to rest on the floor, and two wooden screws by which it could be fastened and unfastened from the arms of the chair. It was painted drab, with a narrow stripe of garnet near the edge. Alfred felt justly proud of it, for it was all his work.

Floy thanked them, with a happy face, and enjoyed as much as they did its final adjustment. Rhoda threw her bag of books on one side, and sat down on a stool, watching with perfect content.

“Have you been to school?” asked Floy, looking at the bag.

“Just come from there,” replied Rhoda, “which reminds me. Alf, I’ve a detestable example in compound interest for to-morrow.

Will you please show me about it. I know Floy will not care."

"No, indeed, I'm glad," said Floy, eager to keep them there a little longer. She looked on enviously when Rhoda took out her slate pencil and Arithmetic, and Alfred and she commenced to work together. She could not understand Alfred's explanations, but she so longed to be puzzling herself over just such things. It was some time before it was finished; but at last they "got the answer," in school parlance, and Rhoda put up the slate with a sigh of relief.

"Louise has been giving me an account of how bravely you told your love for Jesus in school to-day," said Alfred, as he watched her pack her books.

Rhoda flushed, but did not reply, and Floy opened her eyes wider.

"Was it hard, Rhoda?" asked Alfred.

“For a moment it was not easy,” replied Rhoda; “but they were making fun of the love of Jesus, Alfred, and you know I could not hear *that*, and keep still.” Her mouth twitched with the recollection.

“‘Jesus bids us shine;’ you are a torch-bearer for the Lord, Rhoda,” said Alfred, with a smile.

Floy looked at the starting tears of the one and the earnest face of the other, and read a lesson. This was it, then, that made them kind and thoughtful of the comfort of others. Floy knew it was something, and she felt that she could readily love the Saviour whose bidding they were so anxious to fulfil.

They said good-by a few minutes afterwards and were gone, and Floy thought over their talk. “It is like flowers which a man carried by the window a few days ago,” she

said to herself; "they were out of sight in a moment, but the fragrance seemed to linger in the air for hours."

Rhoda commenced her work for the doctor the following Tuesday. She found it very different from visiting. She was there punctually, and the doctor had work prepared for her. He kept her steadily engaged until the two hours were over, and when she was dismissed, on the stroke of five, her head was dizzy with the long strain. She was quite weary when she reached home, but she would not think of it. It was cold walking; and when she came in and stood by the library fire, she was glad to warm her hands. How pleasant it was in the pretty room! The fire-light shone on the tall bookcases, pictures, and statuettes, and a mellow light was thrown upon the study-table by a student's lamp placed there. The curtains were drawn,

and a luxurious lounge stood at the side of the fireplace. The French clock on the mantle struck; and, hearing the silvery sound, Rhoda looked up to note the time. Beneath the pretty timepiece there stood a note addressed to herself. She seized it, and tore open the envelope. It ran:—

“DEAR RHODA, — We are going out to grandpapa’s on Thursday for the last of the walnuts and wild grapes. Papa and mamma bid me say that they will be delighted to have you accompany us. You know how glad we young folks will be. If you cannot stop at the parsonage, please drop me a note.

“Your friend,

“ALFRED.”

Rhoda clapped her two hands together joyfully, and uttered an exclamation of great

pleasure. A moment after, however, when she lifted the note to glance at it again, her countenance fell. Thursday! She must go to Dr. Thompson's again then. "What a pity it is not to-morrow," she thought. "I wonder if the doctor would mind my staying away once. I do so want to go; but I promised the doctor, and he may not want me to work for him at all, if I commence in that way. Ah me! it is so nice at Oaklands, and such fun to pick the grapes. How foolish I was ever to undertake any thing which was going to keep me away from so much pleasure. No, I must not think *that*; it is for Floy, and Jesus would be sorry to have me give up fulfilling His law."

She stood a long time thinking over the affair, twisting the note round and round her finger. It was very hard, and she brought a sober face into the breakfast-room. She

went back to the library after tea to study, and when she had finished, it was nine o'clock. She put her books up with a sigh which made her papa look up from his book.

"What is the matter, my child?" he asked.

"Nothing, papa. I am very tired, and I think I will go to bed."

"Do not tire yourself out with lessons," said papa.

"No," replied Rhoda, languidly; "I do not find them hard. I am tired; that is all. Good-night."

When she reached her room, she put her books down hastily, went and knelt by the side of the bed, and burst into tears. She cried from keen disappointment, long and bitterly. By and by, however, the sobs ceased, and she began to pray; and in a few minutes she rose, and, going to the table, opened

her little writing-desk and found a sheet of note-paper and a pen.

“DEAR ALFRED” (she wrote), “I am very sorry to say that I cannot join your party on Thursday. Give my love to your father and mother, and say that I thank them for remembering me. You know it is the day I work for Dr. Thompson. Hoping you will enjoy yourselves, I remain, affectionately,

“RHODA.”

A tear dropped on the corner of the sheet, and Rhoda wiped it hastily away. Not soon enough, however, for the stain caught the eye of Alfred as he folded the note after reading it. “Ah! she was disappointed, I know,” he said, looking at it gravely. “Dear Rhoda! How bravely and well she frames her text.”

When Rhoda went to supper Thursday night, there stood by her plate a willow-basket filled with wild grapes, and a card with "From the parsonage" marked upon it.

In answer to her father's questions, she said: "Papa, they wanted me to go to Oak-Fields with them this afternoon to gather grapes, but I could not go, so they have sent the fruit. Were they not kind?"

Rhoda thought those grapes the sweetest she had ever tasted.





CHAPTER VI.

THE RIDE.

“Are they not all ministering spirits?”



PAPA,” said Rhoda, “I want to take Floy to ride in my phaeton.”

When Rhoda had a favor to ask, the granting of which she was doubtful about, she brought the request all out at once, as now.

“And who is Floy?” asked papa in reply, looking over the top of the paper at the earnest little face of his daughter.

“Floy is the lame girl who lives in the little cottage behind our house.”

Her father laughed. “Can you not find a more suitable companion?” he asked.

"She is suitable, papa, and she does need a ride so much. You see she does not often have a chance."

"No," said papa, with another smile, "I suppose not. Well, I do not care, if you desire it very much. You cannot take care of all the world, dear. I was down at the parsonage yesterday, and Mrs. Dana spoke to me of your kindness. Do not take those twelve children into your hands."

"No, papa; but I must help somebody, you know."

Rhoda had reached a point now where she could not lay down her work for very love of it. She had so crowned the cross with roses that it already seemed a bed of flowers.

She gave the invitation that morning as she went to school, and so timidly that it seemed as though she was asking a favor.

"Floy," she said, "I am going out in my

phaeton this afternoon, and should like to have you ride with me. I can drive up so close to the door that it will be no trouble for you to get in."

Floy looked at her out of astonished eyes. "Take *me* to ride!" she said. "I've nothing fit to wear to ride with you."

"You have a hat and a warm sack," said Rhoda, "and the buffalo-robies will keep us warm."

"Oh! yes, but I mean not nice enough."

"That's nothing," said Rhoda. "What does it matter so long as they are warm? I'll be here by three o'clock."

Nevertheless, it was so much to Floy that she spent the whole morning in ripping apart and trimming again a brown straw hat which she wore when she occasionally walked a few minutes in front of the house. She begged her mother to wash and iron for her a clean

collar and handkerchief, and with great care she mended the only pair of gloves she had ever possessed. Her mother, annoyed at what she called her "fussiness," wondered why she took so much trouble, but, at the same time, was overjoyed at the opportunity for a ride for Floy. "Rhoda's friends all wear gloves and clean collars," said she, "and I do not want her to be ashamed of me." Secretly, however, she took no little satisfaction in her preparations. She felt really better when she had pinned the linen collar neatly to her dress, and laid the gloves beside the reconstructed hat. She felt as if she was a part of the respectable *clean* world which she saw pass her window every day. She did not envy the expensively dressed, furred little creature who drove the pony phaeton to the door, with so much skill, at three o'clock. It was not fine things she cared for any

more than Rhoda, who never gave them a thought: it was to be like others, and feel her life a part of theirs.

She had this pleasure in its keenest sense; for not only did Rhoda spring out to assist her in, but, taking her place beside her, she tucked the buffalo-robcs comfortably about them both, and drove away chatting easily, and asking her whether she did not think that pony phaetons were easy to get into, — more so than other carriages. “She did not stop to think that I never rode in a carriage before,” said Floy to herself; and she was more comfortable instantly to think that Rhoda did forget.

There had been a very slight fall of snow, not enough to venture out with a sleigh, but sufficient to render the ground thoroughly white. The swift paces of Rhoda’s little pony sent the blood tingling into the thin

cheeks of the lame girl ; and as they left the more frequented streets of the city, and were among the country residences, the purer air was drunk in by the one who had hungered for it so long.

It was entirely still ; and the white mantle which had fallen upon trees and roof still remained there to cover up all awkward shapes and unsightly colors, and render every thing perfect in its purity. Sometimes little Fun's quick steps were the only sounds that broke the stillness, and then Rhoda would commence to chat so pleasantly and cheerfully that Floy felt it as almost a part of the beautiful day and time.

“ I am to show you where we go to church, and where Aunt Patty lives,” said Rhoda, breaking one of the pauses. “ I wish you to think it is pretty, but it will not look to you as it does to me, for it was once my mother's

home, and she sleeps near it. Ah! there is some one whom I know."

They were passing an elegant mansion, which stood back and up from the road. The lawns swept gracefully down to the highway, where they ended in a hedge of arbor vitæ. Breaking the hedge at one point was a porter's lodge, which was a very pretty house in itself, gothic in shape, and highly ornamented. A road at one side of it swept up to the house, and on this road, just passing through the gateway, was a girl of Rhoda's age. When she saw Rhoda she sprang forward, and Rhoda checked her horse until he stood still before the gateway.

"Are you coming in, Rhoda?" asked the girl eagerly. "Ah! I wish you would. Where are you going?"

"I cannot come in," replied Rhoda. "I am going out to Aunt Patty's; this is my friend,

Miss Floy Richardson. Floy, this is Miss Morrison." The two bowed, — one, with a flush of pleasure at the delicate thoughtfulness which had prompted the introduction; and the other, with a stare which fortunately Floy did not quite understand. Miss Morrison drew back, and did not insist that Floy and Rhoda should come in. Rhoda saw why, and her eyes flashed.

"Are we to come in *now*?" she asked, with a curling lip.

"I've a music lesson at four o'clock, but if you would like to come in until then I should be —"

"Don't say happy, Julie," interrupted Rhoda. "Politeness should shake hands with Truth. But my friend is not strong, and I am afraid to sit still in the cold. We must drive on, dear Floy, I think. Good afternoon, Julie."

Fun responded to the rather emphatic hint of his mistress, and sprang forward. There was no word spoken for some minutes, and Floy was studying the set lines of Rhoda's face with some anxiety.

"I was in your way, was I not?" she said, suddenly discovering what was the matter, and speaking bitterly.

"In my way? Never, Floy, dear," said Rhoda, sadly. "I lost my temper, and I'm very sorry for it. It was annoying; but nothing could excuse my hasty speech. I'm a naughty girl, Floy, but I must not let you suffer on my account. Yonder on the hill is the church, and Aunt Patty's is beyond amongst that clump of snow-crowned trees."

Floy looked eagerly, but saw no house until they were quite near. The stone cottage was picturesquely set among evergreen trees, and the red-curtained windows reliev-

ing the dark ivy that climbed all over it made a very pretty picture. There had been a little bird of a note sent that morning to Aunt Patty, to tell her they might be expected; consequently, when the carriage-wheels left their imprint upon the snow and Fun stopped before the door, Aunt Patty and Ally came out upon the step.

Rhoda sprang out. "We are going in for a few minutes, Floy," she said, with an air as if it was quite a matter of course; and, at the same time, she reached out her hands for the crutches, which she placed so that Floy could lean upon them as she made the first step from the little vehicle.

Aunt Patty received them very cordially, and Ally kissed and hugged Rhoda to his heart's content. The beautiful warm sitting-room, with its cosy furnishings, the bird singing in the window, the low rocking-chair and

graceful sewing-basket, the alphabet blocks upon the brilliant rug before the fire, and the great dog, which was lying near them, keeping guard with his nose resting on the letter A, made a picture which, to Floy's unused eyes, was a feast.

Rhoda took possession of Ally, and left Aunt Patty to talk to her friend. Floy thought she was happy when she sank back in the chair which was placed for her; but the gentle refined speech and kind sympathetic face which she heard and saw were food for hunger. Rhoda, perceiving her happiness, stayed as long as she dared. Aunt Patty brought them some hot chocolate and cake, and Floy ate and drank in a maze. Then they took their places in the little carriage again.

"How is it that you know just what will please me best?" said Floy, with a happy

face, settling back in the carriage with a grace which might have been mistaken for a habit of riding.

“I don’t know,” said Rhoda. “I’m glad if I do, I’m sure.”

As they turned into the city streets, Rhoda saw Alfred on the pavement just ahead of them. Quick as thought, she drove close up to him and stopped.

“Alfred,” she cried out, “come and ride home with us.”

He looked up, and, seeing who it was, came to the side of the carriage and shook hands with both girls.

“You have not room for me,” he said.

“Oh! yes, we will make room,” said Rhoda.

There really was room for another, so Alfred took his place between them. “Now, tell me where you have been,” said he.

“ Out at Aunt Patty’s; and, as the fishermen say, ‘all along shore.’ How are all at home?”

“ Bessie and Harry are not very well; all the rest are as usual. Where shall I drive you, — to the cottage or to your house?”

“ If Floy is not too tired, to our house. I want her to come in a little while. Drive to the side door; it will be easier for Floy to alight there.”

“ You make every thing easy,” said Floy, delightedly, as with the help of the two she came into the library. “ Oh, the books!” she exclaimed, for the first time showing her surprise at any thing. “ I should think you would read and study here all the time. Isn’t it beautiful!”

Alfred called her attention to one or two bright-colored paintings which hung upon the walls, and to a beautiful white marble bust

of Rhoda's mamma which occupied one corner. She gave them attention because he asked it, but her eyes always returned to the books.

"This is where I study," said Rhoda, pointing to a deep chair by the table whereon lay her bag of school-books.

Floy moved towards it, and sat down. "I can almost imagine I am studying," she said; and then her eyes suddenly and unexpectedly overflowed with tears.

"Why, Floy, do you want to study?" asked Rhoda. "I'm sure I will teach you all I know; it is very little, but it will be a path to lead you to more."

"If you knew how much I long for it," said Floy, wiping away the tears with her handkerchief, which Alfred and Rhoda both noticed had been freshly washed and ironed. "I want to study more than any thing in

this world; more than even I desire a thick shoe."

Rhoda shot a look of triumph at Alfred, and replied: "You shall know all that I do."

Presently, the visit and the ride were over, and Floy, with excited eyes, and cheeks in which the blood was throbbing, was at home, telling to the open-mouthed listeners her afternoon's pleasure; and as Rhoda said good-night to Alfred at the door, she said, "Yes, I should have had a perfect afternoon, if I had not lost my temper."

Floy had her books and her teacher in a day or two. Rhoda felt very much embarrassed at the idea of teaching; but Floy was so eager, and seemed so pleased with the help given to her, that a task became a pleasure. Rhoda ran in a few minutes before she went to school; and upon the days

when she did not go to Dr. Thompson's she stopped on her way home to see how the work progressed. Rhoda was well advanced for one of her age, and she found that there would be some months at least before her pupil would be at her side. In the studies where she was deficient, she sought Alfred's help; and, between them, Floy had a prospect of rapid advancement. She was very happy in these days; the narrow home and coarse surroundings seemed to fade away when she opened her books and arranged her work upon her little table, which had proved so useful to her. She made one book hold open another, and while her fingers were occupied with the work that brought her money, her eyes and mind devoured the contents of her various books.

Often the tatting or knitting would fall forgotten, and her eyes glance over page after

page of history or geography until something external recalled her suddenly to her occupation. Better than this, she no longer felt alone in the world, for she had an interest in the things which made a part of the lives she had longed to share. Best of all, through the gentle teachings of Rhoda, she heard now and then, more and more often as the time sped on, a mention of the Source from which all learning comes. *He* was always spoken of in such a loving voice, and with a manner which showed such complete reliance upon His great goodness and love, that Floy, almost without realizing it, began to revere and love Him who had sent her one by one, like great drops of a refreshing shower, the wherewithal to make life blessed.

This influence was often unconscious on Rhoda's part; but the girl carried about with her continually such a spirit of Christ,—such

a love of His work, that all those about her caught a little of her zeal and pure affection.

So the afternoon suns of December struck across the picture in the breakfast-room, and the lilies-of-the-valley lifted up their heads and smiled a welcome to the little spirit who moved in and out of the room, intent on bearing burdens.





CHAPTER VII.

AT THE PARSONAGE.

“Free footsteps for the weary,
Low voices for the sick;
And in the little rubs of life
A kindly thought and quick.”

QU E Monday afternoon, early in the month of January, Rhoda came from school round by the parsonage. It was out of her way; but Louise had not been at school for a day or two, and Rhoda wondered if any one was ill. She was almost a stranger herself at the house, for her self-imposed duties had kept her so diligently at work that she had little time for visiting. She rang twice at the parson-

age door before she was admitted, and then it was Mrs. Dana herself who came.

“Rhoda, have you had the measles?” she asked, holding the door open a few inches, and putting her face to the crack.

“Yes,” replied Rhoda. “I was ill three weeks with them.”

“Come in, then,” said Mrs. Dana, opening the door to admit her. “Jennie and Louise are sick with them, and little Bessie is threatened. I’ve my hands full.”

The poor woman looked completely worn out. Will and Harry and May came running pell-mell through the hall to see Rhoda. They had been sliding down stairs on the balusters, and building a train of cars with the dining-room chairs, and were ready for more fun wherever it was to be had; they raised a shout when they heard Rhoda’s voice. The mother, who must needs devote

her energies to the sick-room upstairs, felt powerless to stop the tumult.

When Rhoda comprehended all this, she drew Harry to her side, and, telling Will and May to follow, led the way into the dining-room. She seated herself, and declared she was going to keep school.

"It's a new kind of school," she said. "Everybody who is good gets a peppermint drop at recess, and all the bad ones have to sit still and see the good ones eat them." There was instant silence. "Now, in this school," continued Rhoda, "we learn to count up to one hundred, and to spell words of five letters. First class in counting, stand up. Every one who can count as far as one hundred gets a peppermint drop, and those who cannot count more than fifty get half a drop."

While she talked she had uncoupled the

train and set the cars up on end; that is, put the chairs in their places. She spoke low, and appeared so much in earnest that she had very obedient scholars. Moreover, the peppermint drops in a white paper tied with a pink string were taken out of her pocket, and placed on the mantel-piece. Mrs. Dana stood listening a moment, and then went off upstairs to her sick ones with a feeling of relief.

When the recess came, the drops were distributed, and Rhoda sent them all out into the garden to play, and promised to those who made no noise another peppermint when they returned. As soon as they were well out of the house, she bounded upstairs. She met Alfred on the first landing.

“ Ah, Rhoda ! ” he exclaimed, with surprise and pleasure, “ where are you going ? Don’t you know we have measles in the house ? ”

“ Yes,” she replied, “ and I’m going up to



Rhoda.

help your mother. I wish you would go into the garden and keep the children still until recess is over."

"Recess!" said Alfred, bewildered.

"Yes, I'm keeping school," laughed Rhoda, as she ran on.

Alfred looked after her with loving eyes. She found so much to do upstairs and down, that it was almost dark before she left the parsonage. They all seemed sorry to let her go; and the younger ones crowded around her and shouted after her. Mrs. Dana kissed and thanked her, looking pleased when she promised to come again.

Rhoda thought of her father's remark, "Do not take those twelve children on your hands," and smiled. "I must help them a little if I can," she said to herself.

And so it came to pass that during January and February she had scarcely a daylight

hour that she could call her own. She erred, as many have erred before her, in giving so much zeal to her work that her own health and strength were left out of the reckoning. There were her lessons, to which she must devote her evenings unreservedly, and in school hours her place was at her tasks. Before and after the session she stopped to assist Floy, whose rapidly brightening face and manner fully repaid her. She had gained permission to give Floy the use of the library two hours a day; and, painful as it was to her to move, she rarely lost the opportunity to avail herself of this privilege. It was one of Rhoda's greatest pleasures to come in and see the lame girl in a deep chair bending over a book, and to see her flush and smile of welcome. Tuesday, Thursday and Friday afternoons were devoted to Dr. Thompson's work. She never missed a day, but sometimes, when she was forced to

go out in a hard storm with waterproof, umbrella, and overshoes, her heart would almost fail her, and she would wonder whether the end was worth all the weariness she suffered. It was a very cold winter, and it was hard to leave the warm library fire after lunch and go to that book-entombed room, to bend over papers and encyclopædias for two hours. The doctor was very kind, and often made her stop and rest; two or three times he gave her a great red apple to eat, and made her leave her work and sit by the fire to enjoy it; but Rhoda often put on her hat with a weary little sigh that made the doctor give her a keen look. He wondered often what her motive could be; and he admired her perseverance. He was puzzled, too, that the daughter of a wealthy man like Mr. Rushton should take so much trouble and spend so much time to earn a sum which

would not buy one picture of the many which adorned the walls of her home.

In upon all this came the illness at the parsonage; and when Rhoda found how sorely help was needed there, she gave up Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday afternoons to the children there. They learned to watch for her coming as the brightest part of the day; and Mrs. Dana's harassed face would unbend into a sunny smile of welcome as she stooped to kiss her little "ministering spirit," as she called her. Rhoda enlisted Aunt Jane's sympathies, and that good lady, although she could not often be spared to go herself to the parsonage, sent many delicacies; and Rhoda never appeared without something to amuse the little ones, or tempt the appetites of those who were recovering. Many there were who sent kindly messages and delicate dishes; but

Mrs. Dana could not help wishing very often that, instead of ordering their servants to prepare and send the dishes, they would themselves step in for a half-hour to lift the burden from her shoulders. It is very easy to sit still and do good through the purse, and the world praises such, while the workers, who see that the means are properly applied, who never tire of "going about doing good," are the ones who receive the blessing of Heaven.

Jennie and Louise were not ill all this time; but as they began to recover, others sickened, and the measles bid fair to spread through the family. Convalescent people are not easily amused, and Rhoda's heart almost failed her sometimes. This constant toil was wearing upon her strength. Fun stood stamping in his stable a great deal too long; and it was only when Rhoda could take one

of the parsonage children or Floy to ride that the little sleigh or phaeton was brought out.

Aunt Jane was indignant; and told Rhoda that she should certainly appeal to her father, who, being a busy man, did not notice the paling cheeks and languid step of his daughter. But Rhoda begged, "Not yet, Aunt Jane. I shall stop in two or three weeks now. They are getting better at the parsonage, and it is the first of March to-morrow. By the middle of the month I shall be through with Dr. Thompson's work."

"Dr. Thompson's work! What is that?" demanded Aunt Jane.

Rhoda, who had spoken without thought, was now very unwillingly obliged to explain. She said so little of herself and so much of Floy's need that Aunt Jane turned to the fire and began to busy herself with the coals to hide the emotion in her face.

"You little saint!" she exclaimed involuntarily.

"What?" said Rhoda, in amazement.

"You little sinner," repeated Aunt Jane, changing her noun, "you will ruin your health; every particle of color will leave your face, and you will be good for nothing. I'm going to write to Aunt Lottie and tell her to come after you and take you into the country."

"No, no," cried Rhoda, "not yet. Wait a few weeks, and then I will be glad to go."

"You will be ill before that time."

"Aunt Jane," said Rhoda, earnestly, "I'm trying to do God's work. Do you suppose He will let me fail before it is done?"

"I suppose not, child, but I wish the first of April would come." The old lady went off silenced, but not satisfied.

A few evenings after this talk, she found

the family at the parsonage so much better that she thought she might be spared. She came into the dining-room before she left, and found both Dr. and Mrs. Dana standing on the rug by the fire.

“Here is my Spirit of Love,” said Mrs. Dana, putting one arm around her and drawing her up to her side with a kiss and smile. “I do not know what we should have done without you all these weeks, my darling,” she said.

Dr. Dana looked down on the earnest little face with great approval. “I undertook to write a sermon upon your text the other day, Rhoda,” he said, “and then I remembered that you were preaching a better sermon than I could prepare, so I gave it up, and left it to you.”

“I do not understand you, sir,” said Rhoda; but just then the door opened, and the chil-

dren rushed in. Jennie pulled Rhoda down into a chair and leaned over her to show a new scrap-book she had been making. Fanny knelt before her, pointing out its beauties as her sister turned the leaves. Louise, who was walking up and down at the end of the room with Dick in her arms, occasionally put in a word of droll comment. Will, Harry, May, Maggie, and the twins, Lily and Louis, gathered at the back of the chair to see whether Rhoda liked it. Little Bessie pulled on her dress and said, "Dear Oda, like it?" while Alfred stood looking down upon the group with Rhoda's hat and fur sack upon his arm. Papa and mamma looked at this group with a tender fondness for this girl about whom they all clung so lovingly. She rose presently to go, and they could see what the charm was that drew the children to her. She thanked Jennie for the book,

asked Fanny if she chose the pictures, caught up Bessie with a kiss, and, asking the others if they were ready to say good-night, received from Alfred's hands, with a sweet smile and low "thank you," the sack and hat. They followed her into the hall and held open the door for her. Alfred took his hat from its nail and her little basket from her hand, and they set off down the gravel walk. Little Will came rushing through the hall, working himself into his great-coat and shouting, "Has she gone? Where is she?"

"Oh! Alfred is with her," replied Fanny from the piazza. "Alfred will take care of her. *You* need not trouble yourself."

Alfred, hearing it, turned a gentle look toward Rhoda, and helped her carefully over a glare of ice in the path. They met and passed Dr. Thompson, who was just going in at the parsonage gate. The children

were still in the hall talking about Rhoda; and as he passed them he said, "Who is Rhoda, and what does she do?"

"Don't you know Rhoda," said Will. "What a stupid you must be! Rhoda is everywhere; and we could not live without her."

Mr. and Mrs. Dana, who came forward to greet him, heard the last of this speech and smiled.

"Do you find Rhoda Rushton an interesting girl?" Dr. Thompson said presently, recurring to the subject.

"She is more than that," replied Mrs. Dana; "she is a sunbeam, and the atmosphere seems to clear whenever she appears within our doors."

"She has been working for me lately," said the doctor, musingly.

Mrs. Dana exclaimed, "Working for you!

She spoke of it to me, but I did not think she would be able to persevere. How much the child must do ! I am afraid I have been selfish, for she has been my constant helper and comforter ever since the children have been ill."

"She has worked for me now nearly three months," said Dr. Thompson, "and has never failed to meet her appointments ; but I cannot understand, with all her gentle, affectionate ways, how it is that she is so miserly."

"If there ever was a generous nature, it is hers," said Mrs. Dana, earnestly.

"Then why has she worked so perseveringly for three months for the sake of a little money?"

"Is it possible she did not tell you? Dear child! She does not let her left hand know what her right hand doeth. Dr. Thompson,

she is working to purchase for a lame girl a support for her limb."

The doctor opened his eyes wide, and gazed at Mrs. Dana in speechless wonder.

"She did not wish to ask her father for the money, because she said that would not be any effort to her, and she wished to do something for her Saviour. But, doctor, while she has been working for you she has spent three afternoons in every week taking care of and amusing some of my children while the rest are ill. If I had known it!"

"Yes," added Alfred, who had entered the room, "and at the same time, she is teaching lame Floy, and attending school herself."

"Why did you not tell me, Alfred?" asked his mother, reproachfully.

"I begged her to allow me to do so, mamma, but she would not; she said you had too much care, and she must help you bear part.

I have tried to lighten her labors whenever I could."

"She shall not look out another reference for me," said the doctor, bringing his hand down violently upon the table. "She has earned the money over and over again. I could not understand the self-sacrificing little creature. The amount she has been doing will cause her health to break down in six months," he added excitedly.

"She is not as strong as she was some months ago," said Alfred, gravely.

When Rhoda went softly into Dr. Thompson's room, the next day, he was busy writing. He looked around, however, and seeing who it was, rose quickly and came to meet her. He shook her by both hands, and led her to a seat, with a pleased smile on his face. "You are not to work to-day," he said, laughing at her astonishment.

“Not to-day, sir! Why not?”

“Because I’ve nothing for you to do; I’m going to give you your earnings;” and taking out his leather purse, he laid in her lap more than the amount she had agreed to work for.

“But, Dr. Thompson, sir, I have not earned this,” said Rhoda, in dismay.

“Yes, you have more than earned it, dear child,” he said, drawing her towards him. “You may use any change you may have left after the shoe is purchased in other comforts for your lame friend. Why did you not tell me the reason you did the work for me?”

Rhoda’s lip quivered. “O, sir, you are very kind,” she said; “but I will work it out.”

“No, you will not,” said the doctor, getting excited. “You are wearing away all your strength, and your face is unearthly this minute. He held the gentle face between his

hands, and did not say, as he pressed kisses upon it, that it seemed more of heaven than earth.

“You are my little guest this afternoon,” he said, after a minute, “and I am going to put you into my big chair and show you pictures.”

He amused himself with his pleasant occupation, and, bringing the pictures, sat down beside her and talked about the beautiful German landscapes so interestingly that Rhoda forgot every thing in the pleasure of the moment. By adroit questions in the midst of the picture-showing, he drew from her all she had been doing, and she told him voluntarily of the text she was trying to frame. She made that the reason of her good works in an apologetic tone, as if it was necessary to have an excuse for going out of the way to love her neighbor as herself, as if she had

been acting selfishly; because this burden-bearer received so much comfort and happiness in the midst of her toil, that it seemed to her the telling of it must seem selfish; and, besides, she longed to fulfil the law of Christ, and made that the only object. When the engravings were exhausted, Dr. Thompson brought some sweet oranges and made her eat two, sitting beside her and peeling them for her. When a learned or great man turns aside to do a little pleasant thing it is always with a grace and touch of freshness alike strange and very charming. Nobody could have appreciated Dr. Thompson's attention more than Rhoda.

When at last she was ready to go, she thanked him again and again for his kindness; and added, "Dr. Thompson, should you like to have me come to visit you once in a while?"

“ Ah, yes !” replied the doctor. “ I shall miss you very much.”

“ Then,” said Rhoda, “ I shall come as a friend very often, and as a friend I shall look out references for you all the time I am here.”

She hastened down the street, clasping the money she had earned, and ran in a moment at the parsonage. She rushed into the sitting-room, and found Alfred alone studying his lessons by the window. She came up quickly and knelt beside him. “ Alfred, look at this !” she cried. She spread the money out for him to see, and tried to add more words, but her tongue failed her; and, leaning her head on the window-sill, she cried for very joy.





CHAPTER VIII.

FLOY'S FUTURE.

"The dear Lord sends the work,
And He sends the promise too;
And he who toils for God
Is blest his whole life through."

FLOY was so astonished when Rhoda asked her to go to be measured for the shoe, that she hardly knew how or what to answer. She did not recover from her bewilderment even when the order had been given and the measure taken. In the first place, she could not realize that the great desire of her life was actually to be fulfilled; it did not seem possible. Was it true that she really would be able to walk easily from

place to place as others did, and to be able to go and come as she liked? Besides this, she could not decide from whom the blessing came. She knew that God had sent it, but through whom she did not know. Rhoda told her that she was entrusted with the funds to purchase the shoe for her; and although Floy strongly suspected that Rhoda was in some way the giver, she could not thank her, because Rhoda would allow her no opportunity. If her father had given her the funds, Floy felt sure that Rhoda would have told her, and have been quite ready to carry back to him her expressions of thanks. She asked a number of questions, but Rhoda gave evasive answers. Once, when Alfred stopped to show her about some puzzling study, she asked him. He smiled.

“Rhoda has instructed me not to talk with you upon that subject,” he said.

She urged, "I do so wish to show my gratitude to somebody."

"I think the donor of your gift knows just how grateful you are," was all that Alfred would say.

Both girls waited very impatiently for the day to arrive when the shoe was promised to them; but it so happened that upon that day Rhoda had a severe sick headache, and was forced to keep her head upon the sofa in the library. She made a great effort to rise, but the sickness and the pain drove her back again. She was determined, however, not to be disappointed, so she asked Jones the waiter to drive Floy down town that the new shoe might be fitted to her foot. She watched from her window, and saw the phaeton stop at the door of the cottage, and Floy, with crutches and difficulty, take her seat in it. The lame girl looked up when she was seated,

and kissed her hand joyfully to Rhoda, who watched them drive away, and then sank back on the pillow with a sigh of pain. It was so still in the house that even her busy little brain ceased to work with nothing to work upon, and when Aunt Jane came into the room on tip-toe, Rhoda was fast asleep.

An hour afterwards a step, firm and steady, awoke her. There came a quick tap at the library door, and Rhoda raised herself on one arm and said, "Come in." The door was opened, and Floy came walking across the room readily, easily, with only a slight halt in her step and a little heavy sound when her new support struck the floor. She came forward, her face full of the thankful joy she felt.

"Think, Rhoda," she said, "I walked up the steps and across the hall almost as you would do."

Rhoda smiled and held out her hand. "Dear Floy," she said, "I am so glad."

"Glad, Rhoda!" said she, grasping the hand; "you cannot imagine how I feel. Oh! tell me who I may thank. I know it is through you, my dear, dear friend, but how?"

"Thank *God*," said Rhoda, gently. "The person He entrusted with the money needs no thanks; your added happiness will be reward enough."

"I've thanked God every hour since I knew of it," said Floy, "and every day since He sent you to me to be my friend. Now I must go, for mother will be anxious to see me."

"My head is better," said Rhoda. "I will come out to the door with you." So they walked through the room and hall together as any two girl-friends might, and Rhoda

stood in the doorway and watched her friend walk down the steps and across the road.

“Who is that?” asked Aunt Jane, coming to her side.

“That is Floy, with her new shoe,” replied Rhoda.

Aunt Jane opened her eyes. “Is it possible that the new shoe can make such a difference!” she exclaimed. “Well, I should think you would be satisfied now. Come in out of the dampness.”

Yes; Rhoda was satisfied. In her heart she thanked the dear Lord who had enabled her to do so much. She was not recovering, however, from the strain of the past two months. She moved about the house languidly, and was often found upon the library sofa.

About a week after Floy's desire was fulfilled, Rhoda was found by Aunt Jane curled

up in a great lolling chair by the library fire, with her head lying languidly against the cushioned arm.

“What is the matter, Rhoda?” she asked.

“Oh! nothing,” replied Rhoda; “tired, that’s all.”

“I do not believe you will ever rest so long as you stay in the city,” said Aunt Jane, anxiously. “It is half-way into March now. I shall write to Aunt Lottie to come and take you out into the country in April.”

“I shall be better as soon as I’ve rested a little,” said Rhoda.

“Well, you’ll rest in the country then. Here is a letter Jones brought in from Aunt Patty’s.”

She departed, and Rhoda broke the seal. It read:

“DEAR RHODA,—I was glad to have the

note from you telling me about Floy and her new shoe, and sorry to hear that you were not well. I should have been down, but you know there is a little stranger here, and Ally's nose is quite out of joint. Notwithstanding this, however, he does not cease to cause much trouble; and now that I have another little one to care for, he is too much for me. I have been wondering whether Floy would come out here to the stone cottage, and be nursery governess for him. Do you think she would like the position? I know from the talk I had with her the day she was here, and from what you have told me, that she is fit for a better place; but it is all I can do, and I think I can make a pleasant home for her. Ask her, and if she likes it I shall be only too glad to have her come as soon as it is possible. I hear Ally in the hall riding a chair and blowing a trumpet.

As baby is asleep I shall be obliged to curtail his fun. Come and see my two blessings.

“Ever yours, AUNTIE.”

Rhoda was completely roused by this note, which was better than her dearest dream for Floy. She knew just what a home the stone cottage would be for the lame-girl, — just how all the latent softness, refinement, and beauty which were in her would be brought forth to live action. Rhoda almost wished auntie had asked *her* to be nursery governess.

She ran to one of the library windows and tapped on the glass. Floy, who was studying at her window, looked up, and in answer to Rhoda's beckoning hand put on her cloak and hat, and came out across the street. Rhoda watched, and her heart bounded as she saw with grateful joy the new life with which Floy moved.

“Dear Floy,” said Rhoda, as she came forward to greet her, still holding the note in her hand, “I would have come to you, but Aunt Jane insists that I shall rest in the afternoon. Sit down, please.”

Floy sat down, and wondered what she had been wanted for. Rhoda stood twirling the note, and presently said: “Floy, have you any desire to earn money for yourself?”

“I have always thought about it,” replied Floy, “but more than ever since I’ve learned to walk. Do you suppose that I could get any thing to do?”

“My Aunt Patty has written me,” said Rhoda, “that she would like to have some one in her house to take care of Ally; to sew for him, watch him, dress, undress, and teach him, as he is quite old enough to learn little lessons now. She wrote to ask me if I thought you would undertake the task, and

she assures me, what I can readily believe, that she would make a home for you there."

Floy's face paled, and she caught her breath and looked steadily at Rhoda. "Do you think me fit for the place, Rhoda?" she asked.

"I know of no one better suited," replied Rhoda; "but you must decide for yourself whether it would please you to go."

Floy's eyes glowed. "There is no doubt about *that*," she said in a low tone; "and mother will be so glad that my wish is granted. When does she want me?"

"As soon as you can go. I think she would be glad to have you the last of this week, if you can be ready."

"I will go," she said simply; and her calmness and matter-of-fact manner might have disappointed Rhoda had she not noticed the trembling eagerness of her manner, and the blood coming and going in her face.

“Would you like to write a word accepting my aunt's offer?” asked Rhoda.

“Yes, thank you,” she replied; “and you are very kind. Do not trouble yourself too much,” she said, as Rhoda drew up a chair to the table, and, opening her pearl-inlaid writing-case, selected a sheet of glossy note paper, and gave Floy her own pen. “I will play while you are writing,” she said, with a nice tact, knowing that it would be embarrassing to Floy to be watched while she penned the note. So she opened the piano and played soft, sweet airs one after another.

The girl at the table with trembling hand wrote the note almost hastily, certainly without once lifting her head to arrange a sentence in her mind. When she had finished she looked at the completed letter, not displeased with the penmanship; and then, perceiving that Rhoda had left an envelope, she directed it. It gave

her great pleasure to use the beautiful writing utensils and the paper marked with a large German R, her own initial as well as Rhoda Rushton's. She folded the paper and slid it into the envelope, put the pen in its place, closed the pretty writing-case, and, with great quietness, moved to a seat near the fire, and quite behind Rhoda. The music was holding Rhoda in almost a spell. She played on, absorbed in the beautiful sounds she was creating, and forgetful of the writer at the desk.

Floy sank back into a library chair and heard as in a dream. She saw a new life shut in and made so comfortable that the storms of life seemed to pass by. She saw again distinctly the warm home-nest which she had visited once, and which was a never-to-be-forgotten day. That that brightness and beauty of living should be hers — the

bright-eyed and affectionate boy look to her with loving eyes, and come to her for daily counsel — seemed to her almost too good to be true. Above all, that the gentle, sweet face of the mistress and lady-mother should, day after day, be near her, and the soft, mellow tones of her voice sounding in her ears, seemed impossible. Why should she be taken out of the darkness into the light? Why should she be showered with blessings? The young player touched the chords of an anthem, and played on unheeding. The soul of the listener followed, with heartfelt words of praise. “If I could only do something for God,” she said to herself, “to repay Him for all this He has sent to me. Does any one ever repay, or try to feebly repay?” Then she thought over Rhoda’s work for her — although she knew not the half — her work at the parsonage, of which Alfred had told

her, and the daily beauty of her life. "She is trying," she said to herself, "why may I not try?" Softly the notes died into a hymn; and the musician, with the words of the sweet tones lingering in her heart, sang low and distinctly:

"When obstacles and trials seem
Like prison walls to be,
I do the little that I can,
And leave the rest to Thee.

"I have no cares, O blessed Will!
For all my cares are Thine;
I live in triumph, Lord, for Thou
Hast made my triumphs Thine."

"Rhoda," said Floy's voice at her side, and Floy's hand was on her arm, "I am going now; the note is on the table. Please read it and send it."

Rhoda looked into the usually calm face, all moved and stirred with feeling, all aglow with light from within. "Going, Floy?"

she said, wanting other words, and reaching her hand.

“Yes,” said Floy, seizing the hand, and almost crushing it between her own. She choked for a minute, and then said, “May God in heaven for ever bless you!” and was gone.

“I have not done any thing,” said Rhoda, looking in an astonished way at the hand which was aching from the pressure; “it was Aunt Patty and—God.”

She walked to the table and took up the note. She was a little astonished at the clear handwriting, plain to read, graceful to view, and evincing, as handwriting ever does, the temperament of the writer.

“DEAR MADAM: Rhoda has told me of your wish. It is God who has put it into your heart to reach out from your sweet

home and shelter a starving soul. I am not fit for the place at your fireside which you offer me, but I can grow fit for it, and I will, if you will let me come.

“It has come to me like a burst of light, this hope that I may rise to something better than I am, and so, by and by, raise those I love best to the height which God will help me to gain. I am learning little by little how it is that God is underneath everybody with His everlasting arms.

“I will, if it please you, come to the stone cottage on Saturday. Yours gratefully,

“FLORENCE RICHARDSON.”

Rhoda read the note again. “I couldn’t write like that,” she said to herself. “I wonder if I have been teaching somebody who is going to shoot ahead of me, and climb where I cannot follow.”

She thought of this half enviously, half sorrowfully, for a few minutes, and then she spoke aloud her best thought, — a solid conclusion:

“ Well, I am glad God has asked *me* to help a great soul to climb.”





CHAPTER IX.

ALFRED'S SACRIFICE.

"He that loseth his life for
My sake shall find it."

SO life opened out for Floy into higher, grander space; so she dropped down into a home where she was received and welcomed. She felt the warmth immediately, and her soul leaped to meet it. She took Ally into her heart; and as that is the sure and only way to succeed in winning the affection of children, she gained his expressed approval before she had been there a week.

Mrs. Fandon watched this her experiment

for a few days, and then wished all her attempts would prove as good. Floy pleased her exceedingly. She was gentle, noiseless, quick to learn refinement and to know the time and place for words. Her face was full of the new light of satisfaction, not with herself, but with all that moved or was placed around her. Rhoda, seeing all this, was glad, — glad in the very depths of her heart, but not astonished. It was not more than she expected. She could believe any thing of Floy now.

Rhoda came along the street thinking of this one afternoon, swinging her bag of books at her side as she walked. It was the last of March, and a May day had lost itself, and appeared almost putting the frosts to a final flight. The feeling of lassitude which came with it was shared by Rhoda in common with many others. She swung her books at

her side aimlessly, and the earthly smell in the air made her wish for all sorts of things she could not have, and sigh because she knew them to be beyond her reach. Suddenly, as her bag swung back it was caught, and, turning around, she saw that Alfred had taken hold of it, and had been trying to overtake her.

“You are out of breath,” said Rhoda, as she shook hands.

“Yes,” he replied, “I was far down the street when I saw you turn the corner, and I ran, for I wanted to see you.”

After his first greeting he looked grave.

“Are all well at home?” said Rhoda, seeing the look.

“Yes, thank you,” he returned. “I wanted to ask you whether you would like to take a walk this afternoon, after you have taken your lunch. I have something to tell you.”

“I am not allowed to walk now, except to and from school,” said Rhoda, wondering what he could have to tell; “but if you will go for Fun while I am taking lunch, we will drive up to Watsatch Park, if that will do as well.”

“Better,” said Alfred, “if you are sure you are able to ride. I did not know you were ill.”

“I am not; only a little tired, and riding does me good. I will be ready by the time you get Fun.”

She ran in and up to her room, threw her books away, and hastened to change her school-dress and find her hat and gloves, so that lunch was hasty and slight, for she saw Alfred driving up the street when she sat down to it. She did not keep him waiting; and before long they were trotting at a swift pace toward the park.

Alfred was very silent during the first fifteen minutes of the drive. Rhoda could scarcely persuade him to answer her questions. Finally, however, he broke a silence which had lasted full ten minutes, with a sudden question :

“ Rhoda, you know, do you not, that papa is preparing me for the university, so that I may one day become a minister ? ”

“ Yes,” replied Rhoda, “ I have heard you speak of it.”

“ I have been thinking of it lately ; you have given me occasion to remember it, and other things have been added to that. There are eleven more to come after me to be fitted in some way for life. I know that the eldest son always has a large share of whatever there is to give, but ” — He stopped there, and his mind seemed to renew a struggle that had been going on before.

“Well,” said Rhoda, wondering, and wishing him to continue.

“Rhoda,” he said, turning round and facing her, and speaking with his face all alive with excitement, “it seems very selfish in me to want — as, oh! how I do want — this university education, when the rest must be cut short that I may be helped.”

Rhoda was silent, with her eyes fastened on Fun's ears. She could not help him yet, she knew.

He looked at her; and, finding no response made, continued: “I have thought and tried to decide until my brain is all in a whirl. I have prayed over it, and then self has come in to drown the Spirit of God. I have thought of all our Great Master gave up, and then I have found myself thinking what a great sacrifice I should have to make, as if I could compare myself with *Him*. Rhoda,

I've had torment and trouble about it, and finally, night before last, came the final blow. Mr. Carrington wrote to papa making an offer to take me into his book-store, with a promise of steady advancement if I should do well. He meant to do me a great kindness," said Alfred, choking.

Rhoda's heart ached for her friend, but she still did not dare to say a word. What could she say, indeed, that would cheer him? They had long since entered the park, and the pony was trotting along through one of the tree-lined avenues. They came to a rustic bridge thrown over a road below. The beautiful walks and winding-paths of the park were spread out before them like a picture. The children playing on the green below shouted out their merriment, and the voices, clear and sweet, came up to them. A summer-house, halfway down a smoothly-

mown hill, was filled with little forms laughing and singing. The air of the spring day was over it all, and the warmth of a spring sun was touching the blades of grass and making them green.

Rhoda stopped her pony, and they sat still, looking at the pretty scene.

“Harry wants to be a painter, and Lou desires to study music,” said Alfred. “Jennie says she knows she could write if she only had training; and it is I, if any one, who must bring this good within their reach. Rhoda, I believe I shall accept Mr. Carrington’s offer. What do you think of it?”

Rhoda looked up into his face with glowing eyes.

“I think it is grand,” she said, in a low, earnest tone; “grand and beautiful.”

“What! to be a bookseller?” asked Alfred, with a curious smile.

“No; to be willing to think of it, — to be able to know by and by of ever so much happiness that came about through you.”

She thought of it silently, and they drove on. “It is a very hard thing to decide and resolve to do,” she said presently; “but it is very clear which is the right way.”

It soothed him to have her go right to the heart of the matter, and yet her tone was so final.

“Your ‘Amen’ is very decided,” he said, a little bitterly. “I know that it is best, and I shall do it; but I am not quite ready to rejoice over it.”

“You will be,” said Rhoda, confidently; “and I will tell you another thing; I cannot put it into beautiful words, but I think you will have in the end all that you desired in the other plan.”

“How?” asked Alfred.

“I do not know *how*; only God never sees us go out of our way to do something for others but He puts in the new path that which will be even pleasanter than what we gave up. It never fails.”

“You ought to know,” said Alfred, in a low tone.

They drove for some time, talking over the plan, and looking at the sacrifice in all its details.

“You may think it strange that I spoke to you about this,” said Alfred, “but I felt I must ask some one, and your unselfish burden-bearing first put the idea into my mind.”

At last they turned toward home. They had been out far longer than they thought, and the sun was nearing the horizon. The beautiful banks of white clouds, touched with gold and sailing over the blue, were blown rapidly by a fresh breeze. It seemed to

Rhoda that there had been a battle somewhere, and the smoke from the cannon that announced the victory was floating over her head. She never forgot that ride. All her own burden-bearing sunk into the veriest insignificance in view of this life-sacrifice which had been made by the boy at her side. She felt so grand to have been made his confidant, and yet it seemed to her that she could not half comprehend the struggle it had been to him.

They stopped at the door of Mr. Rushton's house, and Alfred helped Rhoda out, intending to drive the pony to the stable afterwards. He reached out his hand.

"Alfred," said Rhoda, "I have not said much, but I am feeling proud of you, and glad for you, away down in the bottom of my heart, and sorry for you, too, because —" She could say no more, but, dropping his hand, she rushed into the house.

Upstairs first, to master her tears, to take off her hat and cloak, and then to pray. The prayer was a full thanksgiving; it was a little burst of praise such as God loves to hear. Her heart was overcharged yet when she rose from her knees, and there was a light in her eyes which was scarcely of the earth. She smoothed her hair and tied a blue ribbon in it; put on a narrow lace collar, and, breaking off a newly-opened white rose-bud from a plant at her window, she made it serve as a fastening. Her dress was a pearl-colored merino, and the rose lay against it as a beauty-spot. She was ready to go downstairs then, and she left her room, walking slowly, with the grave light in her face brought there by the occurrences of the afternoon.

In this mood she opened the breakfast-room door and walked in. By her sunny

window, with the glow from the sunset all about her, in a low chair sat Aunt Lottie. She looked around as Rhoda came in, and wondered for a moment whether she saw a spirit. Nothing could be more pure than the girl she looked upon ; no face more free from every thing that is worldly and harsh. She was pale, and moved so slowly that by the fading light she seemed to float, and a halo to gather around her. The look in her eyes changed to one of glad surprise, as she saw who sat by the window ; and with a cry of joy she sprang forward and threw herself into her aunt's arms. She had found a place to nestle and rest now. Her aunt drew her tenderly within her arms, and, soothing her with words of affection and with kisses, held her still. She sat up after a few minutes.

“ O, auntie, what a welcome to give you ! ” she said. “ I am so glad.”

"Yes," said Aunt Lottie, "I know all about it, and I have come to take you back with me. What do you think of that?"

"I think it is lovely," said Rhoda, smiling, "for I can just go now."

"What! is all the burden-bearing over?" asked her aunt, with a smile.

"Oh! no, auntie; it has just commenced for life, you know, but now I have come to one of the arbors where Pilgrim rested, and I shall be glad to use it."

"The Master's work may make weary feet,
But it leaves the spirit glad,"

quoted Aunt Lottie. "How much you have been making of my little text, dear," she added, glancing up at it. "Aunt Jane has told me all about your good works."

"Ah!" said Rhoda, suddenly growing grave, "it was God, auntie, dear, who did

whatever there was done; but, oh! it's nothing compared with Alfred's work."

"What is that?" asked auntie.

Rhoda turned her face towards the window, and began to tell her aunt about the afternoon's ride. She stopped several times, but went on to the end, her face twitching with feeling and her eyes kindling with excitement. "Ah!" she said, "it is so good to know such a brave thing of any one."

Aunt Lottie looked at the little earnest face in the sunset light, and said slowly, "Yes, that is grand." She would not disturb the quiet happiness of the face, but let her drink it all in for a while. Presently, however, her father came in, and the spell was broken.

Then Rhoda was ready to talk of the delights before her, and to ask eager questions about the chickens, which were her

especial pets, and the promise of fruit in the orchard. She was so happy over it that Aunt Lottie could see through the veil, and knew what a rest she really craved. Her father looked at the eager face, and was glad Aunt Lottie had arrived. For Rhoda, she rejoiced unspeakably. She had a long talk with Aunt Lottie in the evening; and, by dint of questioning, she told about her burden-bearing. "You know, Aunt Lottie," she concluded, "I should not want to go into the country with you, but I know I shall find some burdens to bear there, for they are everywhere."

Alfred put Fun in the stable and went home. He walked through the hall straight to his father's study and knocked. Hearing the permission to enter, he walked in, and, taking a seat by his father's side, told him the whole story of his struggles. Dr. Dana

reached out his hand and grasped that of his son. His first impulse was to refuse to grant the request that Alfred made, for it was his favorite dream that the boy should follow in his steps; but

“ He thought
Of *eleven* hungry mouths to feed,
Of *eleven* little children's need,
And then of this.”

“ My son,” said he, “ I cannot say nay; but if you had passed through the university course loaded with prizes and favors, you could never have caused me to be more proud of you than I am to-day,—proud to have a son who wins the greatest honor, a victory over himself in a sacrifice for others. I will leave you here to write your note of acceptance to Mr. Carrington.”

The door closed behind him, and Alfred was left alone. It was done now; the sacrifice was made, and there was no turn-

ing back. Alfred saw the prospect of a university education fading away until it was lost, and his dream of one day assisting his father in his ministerial duties likewise grow dim.

He heard the voices of his brothers and sisters in the hall without, and he felt that he had done something to lift their lives, and all the future would be made glorious by this thought. He felt, too, that he might gain a greater height than he had reached after, only in a different path. He was glad, very glad; and it was with an inward thanksgiving to that Master "who pleased not Himself" that he wrote to Mr. Carrington:

"It gives me *much pleasure* to accept your offer."





CHAPTER X.

RHODA'S REWARD.

"He that watereth shall be watered also himself."

AUNT Jane said it would take three or four days to prepare Rhoda's wardrobe for her summer visit, and Aunt Lottie reluctantly consented. Rhoda was kept very busy by the two aunts running about the house to execute little commissions or sitting still to wait to have dresses "tried on." Two or three times she was just nicely curled up in the chair in the library with a book, when there was a call for "Rhoda! Rhoda!" and she was obliged to answer

the summons. Aunt Lottie resisted all this once or twice, and took her out to walk, but she found that nothing would satisfy but the country, and neither aunt nor niece cared how rapidly the days flew. So busy were they, that Rhoda had not time to tell any one that she was going so soon; but in some way or other they all found it out.

The afternoon before their departure, Rhoda and her aunt had been out to purchase for the former a pair of shoes, and to engage their places in the stage-coach; for Aunt Lottie lived so in the heart of the country that the railway did not penetrate it, and only the lumbering stage-coach, with its rattle and clatter, conveyed passengers and mail to Little Commons.

They were quite weary when they returned from their shopping, and Rhoda sought the breakfast-room to rest before going upstairs.

When she opened the door a voice said, "Oh, dear! here she is;" and Rhoda, to her amazement, saw Aunt Patty standing on top of a box which was placed on a chair in the sunny corner, and Floy at her feet holding a picture in her hand.

"Rhoda, we don't want you here," said Aunt Patty; "but now you have come, I suppose you will have to stay."

I should have said, long ago, that the sunny corner was made by three walls, the outer corner of the wall of the house and a chimney which projected into the room, leaving a little niche, and into this was set a window. So the corner had two walls facing each other, and upon one, where the sun struck at evening, hung, as we know, the text which had roused Rhoda into action.

Opposite to this, they were preparing to place another picture. Rhoda came up to

them eagerly to watch. The picture had a frame like that of the first, and was also a text. This one was formed of delicate little forget-me-nots, with gracefully drooping fuchsias twined about the leading letter, and the words were :

“He that watereth shall be watered also himself.”

“Oh! how kind you are,” said Rhoda, looking at the beautiful design. “How did you come to think of that?”

“Love taught us, I think,” said Floy, smiling. “Here, Mrs. Fandon, is the string; you have the nail in the right place now, I think.”

They hung it satisfactorily, and Rhoda stood by and looked on.

“What shall I say to thank you,” she said, holding up her face to kiss, first her aunt, and then Floy.

"Nothing," said her aunt. "I made it, and Floy had it framed, and if you are pleased that is enough."

"It is lovely," said Rhoda. "I shall keep my sunny corner in mind all the time I am gone."

Just then Jones appeared in the doorway. "Miss Rhoda," said he, "there is a gentleman in the parlor who wishes to see you."

Rhoda opened her eyes, and Aunt Patty laughed. "Go, Rhoda," she said, "we will wait here." Rhoda departed, and soon came back with Dr. Thompson at her side.

"What is all this I hear about your being ill and going away?" he asked, as they crossed the hall. "I thought I must come and see about it."

"I am not ill, sir," said Rhoda, "but I am going into the country to-morrow. Here is Aunt Patty, and Aunt Lottie is just coming

down the stairs. This is my friend, Floy Richardson."

The doctor was glad to see every one, and admired both texts to Rhoda's entire satisfaction. She persuaded him to sit down, and they all chatted away so merrily that he grew bright and sunny under the influence.

"Mrs. Motherwell," he said to Aunt Lottie, "you must let Rhoda have a great romp in the fields when she reaches Little Commons, for she has been wearing her brain out over those books of mine, and I never found it out until too late."

"Rhoda enjoyed her work, I know," said Aunt Patty.

"Yes, indeed," said Rhoda, "I shall look back upon those afternoons with much pleasure."

Just then little Ally came running in, and Floy crossed the room to meet him. The doctor noticed her halting step.

“Is this the friend for whom you worked?” he asked quickly.

Rhoda made a motion of silence, and her cheeks flushed; but it was too late. Floy heard and understood the whole.

“O, Rhoda,” she said, coming to her and putting her arms around her waist, “did you work for me, and wear yourself out to gain what has changed my life? I knew it was through you in some way, and now I know why.”

“Did she not tell *you*, even?” said the doctor. “She has worked a long time for a very little money in order to obtain for you what you needed. She has —”

“O, doctor, do not tell it,” said Rhoda. “Floy, dear, it was nothing. I was so happy in my work that you must think nothing of it. Do not thank me.”

Floy, seeing that Rhoda really was troubled,

drew her arm away; but as she did so, she said: "I will thank you, Rhoda, in the way you will best like. I will make my life one long, grateful song."

The doctor rose to say good-by; and Rhoda, with a full heart, held out her hand. "You see how much good you have done, doctor," she said, smiling.

"I," said he, with a good-natured laugh, which hid deeper feeling; "it is not I, but somebody quite different. There is your father. I must speak to him. Good night." He stooped to kiss her, and was gone.

Later, after dark, Alfred came in. He said they had just heard that Rhoda was going away, and his mother was so sorry not to be able to come and see her, and Bessie had cried her eyes red because she couldn't say good-by to dear Oda. Dr. Dana sent a kind message and a new book, and Mrs. Dana a

little basket of freshly baked cakes for Rhoda's journey.

Rhoda took the basket and book with a smile of pleasure, and sent many kind messages to the friends at the parsonage.

"I think the people in Little Commons ought to be happy at the thought of having you there," said Alfred.

"I know of one person who is," said Aunt Lottie.

Rhoda knew that Alfred wanted to speak with her alone ; and as the aunts and Floy were still there, she followed him to the door when he was ready to return home.

When they reached the piazza, he said : "Rhoda, I've made all the arrangements with Mr. Carrington, and I go to work for him to-morrow."

"I'm glad, Alfred," said Rhoda, earnestly ; "and I was wondering yesterday whether you

had thought of the five promises 'to him that overcometh.' Go home and read them, conqueror."

He grasped her hand. "I have put into the basket, with mamma's cakes, a little book-rest for your Bible," he said; "it isn't much, but I carved it, and with every stroke of my knife came a thought of you who taught me to look beyond myself."

Rhoda turned back into the house and into the breakfast-room. It was empty now, and she went and stood before the two texts.

"A command and a promise," she said, half aloud, adding, "those who try only a little to obey the command have the richness of the promise poured down upon them in a full tide of blessing. Dear Saviour! Thine was the work, Thine be the fruit."

The next day they departed; and it seemed to Rhoda that every creak of the old stage

was a note of music. She was so tired! and she leaned back on the broad seat, and as they whirled through the country she drank in the budding beauty of the spring.

They reached Little Commons at six o'clock in the evening, and found the farm-carriage waiting for them at the little village post-office. It was a pleasure to exchange the stage for the easy carriage and the jog-trot of the old farm-horse. The country, spread out in long swells of land, was just ready for its new dress of green, and the farm-houses dotted here and there along the road, as they left Little Commons, looked peaceful and homelike.

More than all did the feeling of rest and quiet pervade Rhoda's heart as she was welcomed at the farm. All confusion was left behind; even the little village, half a mile distant, was only a glimpse at best of the outside

world. There was a fire in the cook-stove in the eating-room, and the old cat lay in front of it lazily purring. The supper-table, which had been kept standing for the travellers, was full of good, real good food; for every thing was fresh, from the newly baked bread, sweet with country milk, to the rich blushing pie, rich with the juices of the currants embodied in it. The evening milking was just over, and Rhoda was given a brimming goblet of warm milk. "We will see if we cannot put some color into those cheeks," said Aunt Lottie.

After tea, Rhoda went and stood at the front door. How peaceful and still every thing was! The sound of the sea, not far distant, came as a murmur, and only served to deepen the peace. The little birds were settling themselves to rest, and the long waves of country were unbroken by any life. Rhoda

could have cried with the very sense of rest and repose that crept over her. It was not lessened when she sought her room. She liked the sloping roof over her head, which she could touch with her hands as she lay in the great bedstead. She remembered how, years and years ago, she used to run and jump in order to get into the same high bedstead; she liked the painted floor and the old-fashioned bedstead with its handles of brass. Very different this all was from her city home; but she liked it perhaps for that very reason. Most of all, she enjoyed throwing back the blinds from her window and looking over miles and miles of glorious country; she would remain entranced by this window at morning and evening until called away by one of the aunties. For there was yet another auntie in the house,—one whose life was spent in busy toil,—w^ho, in the home-life

and domestic toil which may so easily produce a selfish spirit, spent herself continually in love and work for others.

Rhoda could not help feeling, as she was met upon each hand with loving care and unselfish affection, that she might well learn a lesson in burden-bearing from those nearest to her. They had both had their troubles, these two aunties, and had journeyed safely by them all, and come out upon the heights of middle life with pleasant smiles for those who needed cheer, and kindly hands stretching out to lift up the faint-hearted. The old farm opened its arms wide to receive Rhoda; and she wondered, as she stood in the back doorway the Sunday morning after her arrival, drawing on her gloves preparatory to a ride to church, whether, in all the houses scattered over the hills and through the valleys as far as she could see, there might not be some burden-bearing for her to do.

The old horse was brought round to the door presently, and the two aunties came downstairs; Aunt Martha with a smiling glance at the pretty little figure in the doorway, and Aunt Lottie with a still, Sunday look in her calm face. Somehow, it was all restful. Rhoda settled back in the corner of the pew in the little bare country church, with a sigh of satisfaction. She could not help looking about her at first, as familiar faces caught her eye.

Helen Bradley's bright black eyes peered at her from over the top of her mother's pew. She lived in the white house on the south road, which had such beautiful conservatories attached to it; she was very fond of Rhoda, and sent her a nod of welcome across the seats.

Rhoda's attention was called away by Aunt Lottie, who moved further into the

pew to admit some one who was just entering. It was a lady, in deep mourning, with her veil drawn closely over her face. She was accompanied by a grave-faced little boy of about twelve years' old. He looked quickly and curiously at Rhoda, and then his lip quivered and he turned away. His mother, surprised, drew him towards her, but asked no questions nor turned, so that Rhoda did not see her face.

Just then the minister came in, and the choir commenced to sing. Very imperfect singing it was. But presently, a little bird came in at the open window and flew chirping about the church, and Rhoda forgot the choir and thought only of the winged songster. She could not help believing that if birds flew into the churches in the city it would make people feel nearer heaven than they seemed to do sometimes.

Helen ran up to speak to Rhoda as soon as the service was over, and, amid her exclamations of welcome, drew her out into the pretty green church-yard.

“Now, Rhoda, when are you coming to see me?” she asked. “I’ve been waiting this long time for you to come. I want to show you my pretty study-room, and alcove bedroom, and I have such a number of things to tell you.”

Rhoda replied smilingly, and looked about for her aunt. She discovered her presently, talking with the lady in mourning, whose little son stood with one hand in that of his mother, trying to urge her to come away. His eyes were fixed upon Rhoda. “Mamma, come,” he urged, as she turned her steps that way.

The lady had thrown her veil back and was talking earnestly with Aunt Lottie.

Rhoda came up and stood quietly near them, noticing, as she did so, how pale and sorrowful the lady looked.

“Mamma, come,” urged the boy.

“This is my niece, who has come to visit us, Mrs. Randolph,” said Aunt Lottie, turning towards Rhoda.

The lady turned her head listlessly, but when she saw Rhoda's face, she uttered a sudden exclamation of great pain, drew her veil down over her face, and turned abruptly away.

The boy, watching his mother, anxiously followed her, while Aunt Lottie and Rhoda looked after them wonderingly.

“What is the matter with the lady, Aunt Lottie?” asked Rhoda.

“I am quite at a loss to explain,” replied Aunt Lottie, as she turned toward the carriage.



CHAPTER XI.

THE FIRST BURDEN.

“Who bestows himself with his alms feeds three —
Himself, his hungry neighbor, and Me.”



As they were driving away, Aunt Lottie said: “Rhoda, this lady, who appeared so grieved at the sight of you, lives in the white house next ours. She is the daughter of Mrs. Goram, whom you know, and is a widow. She had two children, — a daughter about your age and this son. I never saw her until last January, when she came here in trouble, having lost this daughter. She seems never to have cared much for this boy, but the loss

of her daughter has almost driven her wild. The boy, a gentle, sweet little fellow, is left entirely to himself, and wanders over the fields from morning till night. The mother is wrapped up in her grief, and goes nowhere except to church."

As they passed the white house, the carriage which carried Mrs. Randolph and her son was just entering the gate. The boy looked out sorrowfully towards them, but they could not see the lady who was on the back seat.

The next morning the boy, Jamie Randolph, came to their house. He brought a pitcher of fresh milk in return for some that had been borrowed, but that seemed only a part of his errand. He looked about for Rhoda, but she was not there, so he sat twirling his cap and evidently waiting for her. She had gone upstairs to change her dress, but

presently she appeared in the soft gray Aunt Lottie liked so much; and as she stopped in the doorway, upon seeing who was there, Aunt Lottie introduced her.

The boy stepped forward and held out his hand, looking at her earnestly; but he had no words for her.

“Mrs. Motherwell,” he said, turning to Aunt Lottie, who stood by the table, her hands covered with flour, which she was mixing for bread, “my mamma wished me to say to you and this young lady that she was very sorry to appear so impolite yesterday morning, but the resemblance between poor Marie and this young lady is so very striking that she was quite overcome by the chance meeting. She begged you would remember her grief and forgive her rudeness. She sent this photograph that you might see how great the resemblance is.”

Aunt Lottie took it, and Rhoda came and looked over her shoulder to see it. She almost started, for she seemed to see her own face, as she saw it every day when she looked in the glass, gazing at her from the bit of pasteboard. Even Aunt Lottie exclaimed, "It is very like you, child, and yet I see a difference." She did not say what she thought,—that the mouth had a curl about the lips indicating selfishness, and Rhoda's lips were free from all curves of that sort.

"I wish I could change my face for the poor lady's sake," said Rhoda. It so happened that these were the first words she had spoken.

"Even your voice is like poor Marie's," said the boy, starting. "Ah! I am almost glad mamma did not hear you speak; to me it seems pleasant to hear her voice again."

“Tell your mamma,” said Aunt Lottie, in a gentle voice, as he rose to go, “that we try to sympathize with her in her sorrow, and hope that the face so like her daughter’s will be even pleasant to her some day. It is not strange that she was sad when she saw Rhoda. The resemblance between the two is very striking.”

This remark set Rhoda to thinking. She went through the sitting-room and sat down on the great stone step at the front door. It was shaded by a porch over which the honeysuckle climbed, and through which the humming-birds were flitting. “I wonder,” thought the girl, “whether I could help to soothe that poor lady by being a daughter to her in the place of the one she grieves for so much. It would be rather difficult, for she would not even like to see me at first; but if it only could be done. I should feel then

that I was helping her bear the burden of her sorrow."

She opened a book which she held in her hand, and began to turn the leaves over slowly. She read a few pages, but her eyes would wander away out into the fields, and particularly towards the white house on the slope of the hill. By and by, when Aunt Lottie passed her, she spoke out her thought.

"Aunt Lottie, do you suppose I ever could, in any little poor way, help fill up the empty place left by that girl who was so like me? It seems so strange to be a cause of sorrow to any one; I wish I could become a cause of joy."

"Are you not carrying burdens enough already?" asked Aunt Lottie, gently.

"Oh! no, auntie; but I did not mean that. Do you think it would be well—presuming for me to try and help the lady?"



Rhoda.

A rain-drop is much smaller than a great field of wheat, but it cannot be presumptuous for it to fall upon it and help to refresh the thirsty soil.

“No, dear, I think you may try without fear.”

The next afternoon Rhoda was sitting by a side table in the sunny sitting-room where she had been drawing till her cheeks were flushed with excitement. Just then Aunt Lottie passed through the room. Rhoda rolled up the drawing, leaving it on the table, and looked up. Aunt Lottie noticed the excited face and eager breathing, and presently returned with a little basket in her hand.

“Rhoda,” she said, “I wish you would go down to the white house and ask Mrs. Goram to send these eggs with her own to market to-morrow.”

Rhoda sat up reluctantly, turned a leaf

down in her book, and took the basket of eggs with a little sigh which she did not know Aunt Lottie heard, but which she did hear, nevertheless, and smiled at. "It will do her no harm to breathe the fresh air," she said to herself.

Rhoda took the basket of eggs, and, carrying it carefully, walked down the road toward the white house. She went through the yard and entered the kitchen, where she found Mrs. Goram, and delivered her message.

"Sit down, child, while I empty the basket," said the old lady.

Rhoda did so; and a moment after, the door at the other end of the room opened, and Jamie came in. He flushed, and then very gravely said, "Good morning." Rhoda felt that her face was not bright to him, but she took courage, remembering her aunt's

words, "the boy is left almost entirely alone; perhaps she could be a help to him."

"Where have you been this bright morning?" she asked.

"In the woods, gathering lichens and mosses."

"Have you ever tried to arrange them like pictures on pasteboard?" she asked. "It is such interesting work."

The boy's face lighted. "I have never heard of it," he said. "What do you mean?"

"Give me your mosses, and I will show you," said Rhoda.

Boy-fashion, he had filled his pockets as well as a tin box he carried, and he now emptied them all upon the table eagerly, and ran off for some pasteboard. Rhoda arranged them upon the white surface, forming little roads, trees, and even a mossy cottage, out of the bits he had gathered.

“ You have no red-cup moss,” said Rhoda ;
“ that used to grow in Rogers’ woods, back of
that little frame house at the foot of the hill,
and it is good to make gardens with. Have
you ever been in Rogers’ woods ? ”

“ No,” said Jamie, growing interested and
delighted with the pretty work which grew
under Rhoda’s hand. “ Is it far, and do you
suppose I can ever do that ? ”

“ Oh ! yes, something far prettier than this ;
and I will go with you to-morrow to the
woods if you like, and we can take a piece
of pasteboard and needle and thread, and
arrange the picture there, where we can get
what we want.”

“ That is so pretty,” he said, as Rhoda
stood back to survey her work. “ I wonder
if mamma would like to see it. She is in
the parlor, reading.”

“ We will go and show it to her,” said

Rhoda, catching at the opportunity, and taking up the moss picture.

“I will take it in,” said Jamie, looking alarmed.

“I would rather go, if you please,” said Rhoda, feeling that the only way to see the lady was to go unasked.

Jamie was troubled, and followed her anxiously into the room. Mrs. Randolph did not look up until Rhoda spoke. “We have come to show you our work, Mrs. Randolph.”

She lifted her head suddenly. “Why have you come here?” she cried out. “So like her! Oh! go away.”

Instead of which, Rhoda came and knelt by her side, putting the moss picture in her lap.

“I wish you could love me *because* I look like dear Marie,” she said. “See the moss pic-

ture we have been making. This is the road, and this the house, and to-morrow Jamie and I are going to gather cup-mosses for a garden."

"Yes," said the lady, looking down upon it reluctantly, "it is pretty enough. Marie made pretty things. I have so many of them, but not her!—not her!"

"May I come and see them some day?" asked Rhoda, gently.

"Yes, if you wish. Ah! she was so talented, my Marie. I have seen the picture enough now."

The lady turned her head away, and looked languidly out of the window. Rhoda took up the pasteboard and went out, followed by Jamie. When she turned to face him in the kitchen again, her face was sunny and bright. "Will you come for me in the morning?" she asked, as she opened the door to go.

The anxious face of the boy relaxed. "Yes, thank you," he said, and even smiled as she nodded to him from the gate.

As soon as she was alone the smile was gone. It was so hard to meet with those who almost seemed to dislike her presence, and to try to win this sorrowful lady back to a love of the one child who was left seemed a hopeless task.

Rhoda came into the kitchen at the farm, put down her basket, and stood by the window drumming idly on the pane, and scarcely observing the beautiful spring afternoon without, and the signs of new life growing every day more apparent under the warm rays of the sun.

"Well?" said Aunt Lottie, with a hand on her shoulder.

"I believe," said Rhoda, without turning, "that I am in too much of a hurry. Aunt

Lottie, did you ever find doing good very slow work ? ”

“ Dear Rhoda, God sees even the waiting times.”

“ Yes, I know, auntie ; but I met with almost a rude rebuff down there, and I wondered if it was any use after all to try.”

“ Suppose Jesus had thought it no use to try ! ”

“ O, auntie ! ” exclaimed Rhoda ; and she turned abruptly away and went out of the house. She came back after a few minutes with her hands full of eggs, which she laid one by one in the basket prepared to receive them, her face wearing the same gravity all the while. Aunt Martha found her there. “ Do you want to find me some apples to roast ? ” she asked. “ In the third cellar bin there are good ones.” Rhoda went down into the cellar obediently, and brought

the great red apples. She washed and rubbed them, and Aunt Martha talked so fast and cheerily that the grave face began to relax. Rhoda did not forget her doubts, but she was engaged in pleasant work, and past annoyances look trivial when the present is enjoyed.

“There comes the stage,” said Aunt Martha, as she set the last apple in its place.

Rhoda ran to the door to see the great lumbering vehicle pass. There were two routes to Little Commons, — one from the westward, by which Rhoda had come, and one from the eastward; and as the farm bordered upon this, the stage rattled and clattered by the door daily.

It stopped its rumble to-night at the farm gate; and Rhoda, from her station in the doorway, cried out, “Ah! there is Fun.”

“Go and enjoy it, then,” said Aunt Martha from within.

“No, I do not mean fun, but Fun,” said Rhoda, and ran down the steps, not perceiving that her explanation had been none at all.

Aunt Martha went to the window to find an explanation, and saw Rhoda standing by the side of a pretty black pony, patting its nose, and apparently in high glee. The driver was pulling down a side-saddle from the top of the stage, which he delivered to her with a letter. Rhoda had her hands full, and was glad when one of the farm-boys came to relieve her. He was in raptures over the pony, and Rhoda parted from him reluctantly, saying, with a parting tap on the end of his nose, “Fun, old fellow, you’ve come to a good place, and I’m glad to see you for more reasons than one.”

“How kind of papa,” said Rhoda, reading her letter excitedly to the pleased aunties,—

pleased to see her so joyful. "He was coming to Newton, and so sent pony on that way; now I shall be able to go over the hill to Cosy Nook, and I can visit everybody who may wish to see me."

"I can do so much good with pony, Aunt Lottie," she said privately to her after supper. "I will give Jamie a ride, which will bring the smiles into his face, and perhaps I shall be able to persuade his mother to ride." She was full of life now, and ready for any kind of work. She did not seem to think of the pleasure in store for herself, but rather of the enjoyment Fun might make for others.

"He was sent just when you needed him, Rhoda," said Aunt Lottie.

"Yes, indeed; and Fun, old fellow," she said, shaking her finger at him where he strolled grazing in the field, "you shall help bear burdens enough this summer."

She was very merry for the remainder of the evening; and even when she went up into her room she bent smilingly over her open Bible. Some one had been reading there, and a blue ribbon lay across the words, "He hath given us an example that we should follow His steps."

"What honor to follow the Master so," thought Rhoda; and she remembered that although the steps of the Son of God were often only sorrow and patience, yet He never was discouraged.





CHAPTER XII.

IN THE WOODS.

“And give me ever on the road
To trace Thy footsteps, Son of God.”



AMIE arrived with basket and trowel the next morning, and they set off together for a ramble in the woods.

It was only the first of many taken in the late spring and early summer, for they found arbutus the first day, with a promise of more and of other flowers. Jamie, at first shy, and rarely looking at his companion, — Rhoda well knew why, — gradually lost this feeling, and opened his heart to Rhoda. When the moss picture work was exhausted, she thought of other things, and there rarely came a rainy day

during which Jamie did not open the kitchen door and ask smilingly if Miss Rhoda was busy. Of course she never was, and they spent long days in the old lumber-room with pictures or books, or some new contrivance. On sunny days there were flower expeditions and rides without number. Sometimes Rhoda would mount Fun and Jamie the old farm-horse, and at other times the pony would be led by the bridle and ridden by each alternately, for Jamie did not in the least object to a side-saddle. Often they both walked, so that Fun could carry great branches of flowering shrubs, or, later in the season, baskets filled with berries. The result of each and every one of these rambles was shown to Mrs. Randolph. Jamie tried to persuade Rhoda not to go where his mother was, but hints were of no avail. If flowers were sought, Rhoda always selected the most choice for

the mourner, arranged them carefully in a vase, and presented them to her. If fruit, then a saucerful of the largest and sweetest berries was prepared for her. Rhoda would run in suddenly from some stroll and beg her to come out and see Fun laden with branches and wreaths made of leaves. Several times she actually came out on the long piazza, and seemed interested in the curiosities they had gathered. She even laughed merrily one day when Rhoda mounted Fun, crowned with bushes as he was, and made him gallop around the circle in front of the house. "You little sprite," she cried, smiling, "you are a very wood-spirit, and you put new life into Jamie." She turned toward the boy, who, surprised and delighted, was watching his mother.

"You think it strange that I should laugh, Jamie, do you not?" she said, self-reproachfully.

“No, mamma, dear,” he replied, “I am only glad. It makes you seem as you used to be.”

“Poor Jamie, you have felt the change, I know,” she said; and, turning, entered the house.

By this constant attention to Mrs. Randolph, Rhoda gained two points: she caused Jamie to have a desire to do all in his power for his mother, and when, by any chance, she was pleased with their offerings, he was encouraged to do more for her; and his respect and regard for his mother daily increased. On the other hand, Mrs. Randolph was touched by the fondness shown her, first by Rhoda and then by her son. It began to dawn upon her that there might be something left to live for, and in the society of Jamie she might make up for her loss.

After the scene just recorded, Rhoda went

home with a glad heart, and told the incident to the two aunties, her eyes full of the earnest desire which she felt. "It seems as if God was guiding every step of the way," she said solemnly.

One day Jamie and Rhoda were wandering along a road some distance from home, leading Fun by the bridle. They met people upon the road, all of whom spoke to them smilingly, and passed on. They were no unusual sight now on any of the country roads about Little Commons, — a quiet little boy, with a white straw hat, leading a black pony, and as thoughtful a girl in neat walking dress, either upon pony's back or walking by the boy's side. They often tied the pony to a fence or tree, and plunged into the woods after treasures, coming back laden. One day they had just emerged from one of these hunts, and were discussing whether

they had not better return home, when Jamie — who caught Rhoda's motive, and knew she longed to help others — suddenly said:

“Rhoda, just about half a mile further on live my great-uncle and his wife. They are real nice old people, who live all alone in a little farm back from the road, and they would be delighted to see us.”

“Then we will go there,” said Rhoda, “and we will walk, for pony is quite laden with boughs.”

So they walked on, leading Fun by the bridle, and soon turned off into a scarcely perceptible road. This ended presently in a white farm-house, square and bare, — one of those economical blotches on the landscape, built by our grandfathers, who cared nothing about outside appearance. The blinds were all fastened except at the kitchen windows, and so the three adventurers went

directly towards this the only sign of life. As they fastened pony to a post just by the door, the old lady made her appearance on the step.

“Why!” she exclaimed, “who be you both?”

“It is Jamie Randolph, Aunt Esther. Don’t you know me?” asked the boy; “and this is Rhoda Rushton, and that is her pony.”

“Well, I declare! Come in.” She held the door open and they walked into a sunny place, half kitchen, half sitting-room, where sat an old man by an open western window. Aunt Esther followed, and gave them chairs, which they were glad enough to occupy.

“I remember you well, Jamie,” said the old man. “Why have you not been up to see me before, and where is your mother?”

“Mother is at grandmother’s, but she does

not go out at all since Marie's death. Rhoda and I were gathering flowers in the woods, and so thought we would stop in a few minutes."

"Ah! that was right," said the old lady
"We are real lonely sometimes, and the sight of a young face is good. Who is your friend?"

"Rhoda Rushton. She is staying with Miss Motherwell on the hill. We are always wandering about in the woods somewhere. Did you see Rhoda's pony, sir?"
to the old man.

"No; I will try to hobble across to the window to look at it."

He rose slowly and took his cane; and Jamie, finding he could be of some help, offered his shoulder for the old man's support, while Rhoda carried his chair. From the eastern window he could see Fun laden

with boughs standing near the door, and looking down intelligently at the chickens clustering about his feet. The old man laughed with pleasure. "That's the prettiest little horse I've seen this many a day," he said, "and a good one to travel, I know."

Jamie, who took great pride in Fun, asked Rhoda if she would ride a few moments if he would unload the pony of his burden.

Rhoda was very glad to be of service, especially when she saw that the old couple were so pleased. She discovered, too, that Aunt Esther liked flowers, and so she ran out on pretence of helping Jamie, but really to select some choice blossoms and bring them in to ornament the room. When Fun was relieved of his burden, Jamie called her, and, as Rhoda had taught him to do, assisted her to mount.

"She'll fall, sure enough," said the old lady from the doorway.

"Not she; wait a few minutes, Aunt Esther," said Jamie.

Rhoda, who was an expert young horse-woman, and who knew that Jamie wished her to exhibit her skill for the benefit of the old couple, made her pony understand about it, and they set off trotting slowly down the road. As soon as she was well out of sight, she turned and ordered Fun to move more quickly; and presently pony and rider shot by the house at a fearful pace. She returned after a few minutes, and, using her hands skilfully, made the little animal exhibit all his feats, and held her seat firmly throughout. When she sprang off, however, she was quite weary. She felt fully repaid by the amusement she had given, and never seemed to think, while they were praising and exclaim-

ing, that any of the credit belonged to her skill; she gave all the honor to Fun. She mentioned that she took riding-lessons at home in the city; and the old man, catching at her last word, asked her so many questions about the town, which he had visited so long ago, and was so interested in her account that the time sped, and they found that they must hasten home.

“Do tell your mother, Jamie, that I want to see her,” said Aunt Esther, as they took leave at the door. “Your visit has done us a world of good; and now we must see her.”

“Come again, children,” said the old man from the window. “It cheers me up wonderfully to have such bright young spirits about. Come again.”

“This was not bearing burdens,” I hear some one say; “this was enjoyment.”

They are so often one and the same thing,

that it is hard to separate them; and besides, they gave to the old people conversation for a week, and cheered two lives which, isolated as they were from the rest of the world, found often that the burden of life was heavy.

Rhoda threw herself down when she reached the cottage perfectly exhausted, and hardly listened when Aunt Martha told her she had had visitors since she went away. When she was rested, and had eaten her supper, she asked who had been there.

"Some one who left a note for you," said Aunt Lottie, smiling.

"It was Helen Bradley," said Rhoda, in a disappointed tone; and, having guessed correctly, Aunt Martha put into her hand the note. It was an invitation to spend the day with her early in the following week.

"I would like to go very much, auntie, if you can spare me," said Rhoda.

Auntie smiled assent, and then asked, "Where have you been all the afternoon? I have been almost worried about you."

"We found a burden in the woods and stopped to ease it a little," replied Rhoda, laughing.

"No doubt if you found it you lightened it," said Aunt Lottie. "Where was it?"

Rhoda described their visit to the house in the woods and the comfort they gave; or, rather, she told how much the old lady liked the flowers, and how proud the old gentleman was of Jamie, and how the pony amused them. There was no word of herself, but Aunt Lottie knew who had been the moving power.

"The best of it is, that I may be able to persuade Mrs. Randolph to go there," said Rhoda. "But, Aunt Lottie, one thing puzzles me. I like to cheer people by bringing

them flowers and fruit, by riding for and talking to them, and by going long rambles into the woods; but how am I helping Jesus by what I try to do, it is so small?"

"He commanded us to give a cup of cold water, Rhoda."

"I know, auntie, and I do not want to seem to doubt; but, after all, what honor is paid to Him when we simply help one another without speaking His name?"

"People are not so anxious to help their neighbors that they will do it without a motive; and those whom you cheer and help know very well for whom you are working, and that for His sake you are willing to give up all that you have. Besides, Rhoda, such is the blessed law, that one cannot give out of himself for others without growing daily more like Him who is our pattern; and that is joy enough."

The next day, flushed and out of breath from running in the wind, Rhoda came into Mrs. Randolph's room. The lady no longer met her with hesitation, but received her cheerfully. This morning Rhoda had in her hands some beautiful sprays of blossoms which she had shielded carefully from the wind. She placed them in a little rose-glass, and then came and seated herself on a stool at Mrs. Randolph's knee.

"Did Jamie tell you what a charming visit we had yesterday, Mrs. Randolph?" she began.

"He told me where you had been."

Rhoda described the visit at length. "She is such a pleasant old lady," she concluded. "Is it long since you have seen her?"

"It must be nearly five years," said Mrs. Randolph.

"She has a picture of you, with one of

Marie and one of Jamie hung on each side of it. She said she had never heard much about Marie, and I was sorry I could tell her nothing. Jamie spoke of her, but I knew the old lady would like to hear it from you. May I not drive you up there some day? ”

“ I don't know ; I believe not ; yet I should like to see the old place. Marie used to play there when she was a very little girl.”

“ Yes, they have some toys of hers, and an old swing Jamie and she used to use. They seem to cherish every thing that belonged to their only niece, as they call you, and they do so long to see you.”

“ I believe I will go, if you will take me very quietly, Rhoda,” said Mrs. Randolph ; “ and Jamie, you must go with us ; I cannot spare you.”

Jamie, who had come into the room a moment before, understood Rhoda's sign,

and only replied quietly, "Yes, mamma," without expressing the surprise and delight he felt that his mother was going to ride, and desired his company.

"How did you ever manage it, Rhoda?" he said, when they were safely out of the room. "It will do mother good, I know."

"Never mind," said Rhoda, "it is done, any way, and I am so glad. Let me see. Tuesday I go to Cosy Nook, and the day after we will take the carriage and go up there. That will answer; now I must go."

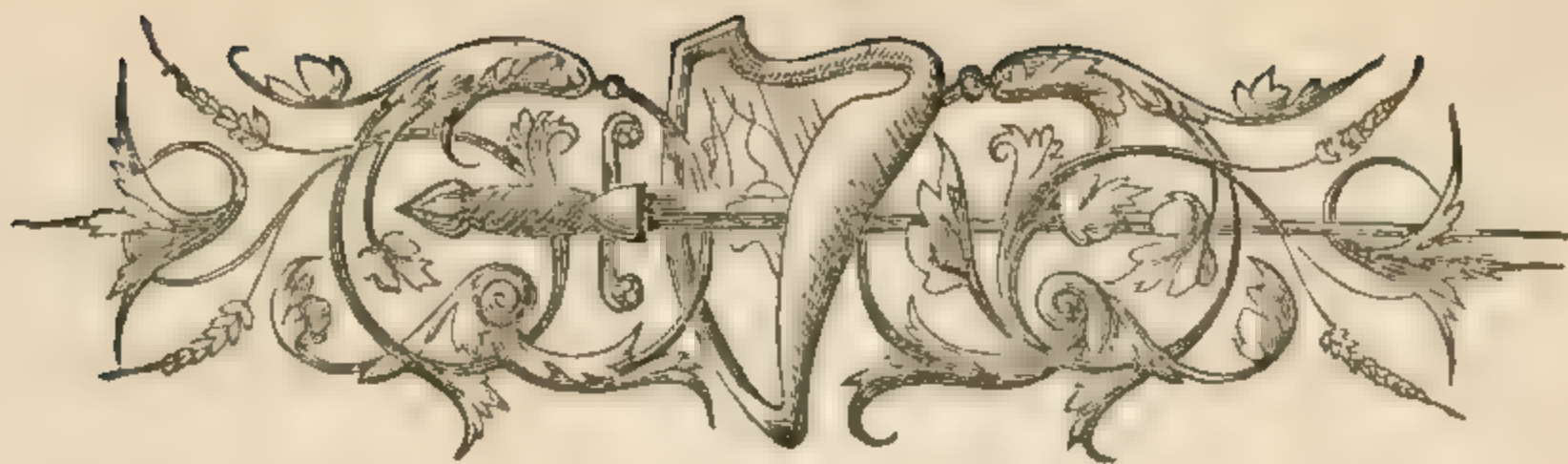
"Rhoda, why not go" — Jamie flushed and stopped.

"What? when?" asked Rhoda.

"Excuse me, Rhoda. I was going to ask why not go Sunday afternoon. I forgot for a moment that you were a Christian. I do not often forget. Tuesday will do just as well. Good-by."

“How did he know that I was a Christian?” said Rhoda to herself, walking slowly up the hill. “I have never spoken of the Lord Jesus to him. How could he know that I was His child?”

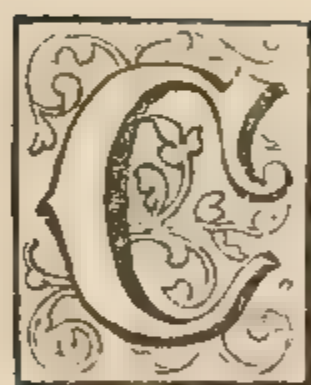




CHAPTER XIII.

COSY NOOK.

“Faith is a great lady, and good works are her attendants.”



COSY NOOK well deserved its name. All the best of the city had been transferred to it and all the worst left behind. The low, rambling house — the shape of which one could never determine — was filled with every thing which could add to the comfort and enjoyment of the inhabitant. Nothing was for show, but all the useful things were, in a way, ornamental. The house was filled with windows jutting out here and there, and were curtained in

such a manner that the glorious sunlight could come in, and strike across the crimson roses and white lilies of the carpet, regardless of the danger of fading. There were French shades to keep out the heat in midsummer; but care was taken that they should be drawn aside at morning and evening. These bright rooms, parlors, libraries, and halls were not shut off with closed doors from everyday living, but thrown wide, and the family lived as it were in the whole house at once. The flowers which were constantly blooming in the conservatory were placed here and there on the staircases or in deep window recesses, so that one came upon them unexpectedly in by-places. The choicest of every thing which found its way into this "Nook" was bestowed upon the only daughter of the bright home, — Helen Bradley; and, strangely, she was growing up a simple, unaffected

girl, not realizing that every one had not the luxuries she enjoyed.

She bounded out upon the long piazza to greet Rhoda upon her arrival Tuesday morning, and helped her to dismount from her pony, chattering in a most amusing manner. She led the way up a broad staircase, and through a wide hall into her own little sitting-room. It had been furnished under her especial direction, and every thing was in perfect fitting with the little sprite who occupied it. The pictures upon the walls were child-faces and groups of flowers in delicate water-colors. A little bedroom was divided from the main apartment by an arch, which was lightly curtained. In the first room stood a desk, which was half a table, the contents of which showed the occupations of the owner. There was a row of school-books placed in order, and a story-

book left open with a slender wooden marker laid between the leaves. A pile of illustrated papers, half cut, and the scissors lying near, showed another occupation; and a half-finished wreath of worsted roses, with a needle suspended from it, still another. A little white kitten, with a blue ribbon around its neck, lay sleeping in the chair; and a bird in a large cage, hung in the deep window recess, was singing with all his might.

The kitten was dismissed without ceremony, and Rhoda was placed in the chair. "There," said Helen, "now make yourself comfortable. You observe that my room is arranged, but my desk is not. I never allow Jane to touch it; I like to find things as I leave them."

"I think you ought to be very happy here," said Rhoda, looking around with pleasure. "You have had it altered since I was here;

but I always thought your house was the prettiest I ever saw."

"Come and see what other changes have been made," said Helen, starting up.

Rhoda followed, and they threaded their way from room to room, upstairs and downstairs; stopping a moment at the cuckoo clock in the library; halting before a pot of tall fuchsias in the hall; lingering in a bay-window, from which the ocean could be seen lying blue and calm in the distance; staying a few minutes to speak to Helen's mother and sister-in-law in the sewing-room; and presently darting off toward the croquet ground. Before they were out of the house, some one called Helen; and, running off, she left Rhoda standing by one of the graceful marble groups that adorned the drawing-room.

Strangely to Rhoda, her first thought was, "How Floy would enjoy all this! how much

more than I do ! and it must be a beautiful life to lead." Then she wondered, with a sting of conscience, whether it was not wrong to wish for a life where all was ease, and where even the knowledge of poverty and suffering did not come. It is a selfish life, she thought, and yet, oh, how pleasant!

When Helen, always smiling and full of life, came dancing back, Rhoda was prompted to tell her Floy's story, hiding her own part, and not allowing Helen to see that she spoke of herself when she said, "a friend of this girl."

They were on the croquet ground, and Helen listened, tapping her mallet softly against the balls, and lifting wondering eyes to the face of her friend. "That was worth all the effort it may have cost," she said gravely, and the next minute darted off to the other side of the ground with a peal of laughter after a stray ball.

They were called in to lunch soon after, and Rhoda was charmed again by the perfection of all she saw around her. Mrs. Bradley presided elegantly; and the simple lunch was served so delicately that Rhoda almost thought the bread and butter had a better taste in consequence.

Helen laughed and chattered merry as a bird, and drew Rhoda away after lunch to her own little room inside the curtained arch to wash her hands. This done, Rhoda walked across the pretty room to a little stand in one corner. There she found a Bible, with little pink silk-markers in it, a book of devotion, and a collection of hymns. A beautiful steel engraving of Christ in the temple hung above the table, and just in front of the Bible stood a vase of flowers.

Helen came up softly, put her arms around Rhoda's waist, and drew her down upon the

little lounge. Rhoda was glad that the astonishment the little table and its contents had excited in her face was not seen.

“I want to talk to you, Rhoda,” said Helen, “and I have been watching for just the right moment. You think me a fly-away girl, I know,—foolish, thoughtless, and all that; but really, Rhoda, I do want to do right, and the fact is—well—I joined the church last winter.”

Rhoda was *very, very* much surprised, and could not help the astonishment in her eyes as she raised them to her friend's face.

“There! you look amazed, and I knew you would; but I am in earnest, and I want to tell you about it.” She stopped a moment, and then began hesitatingly: “I do not know when I commenced to love the Lord Jesus. I always loved Him when I read or thought of Him; and finally, when I went one day last winter to have a quiet talk with Mr. Dodd, our

pastor, and he was so kind, and told me Jesus expected those who loved Him to declare it, I determined to join the church. It raised a storm about my ears when I announced it. Mother said, 'What child's play!' and papa made fun of me. Ed. called me 'youthful piety;' and, altogether, I had a pretty hard time; but I steadily announced my purpose, and they would not actually refuse me. Mother said she was ashamed for the family; and the morning I was baptized she would not go to church. You may believe *that* hurt. Well, I joined the church; but the worst of it is, Rhoda, that that is the end. My life is harder than you think; it is ease and idleness, and nothing to do if I would. I read my Bible, and it tells one of Christ's work and His disciples' work; but I do not find any thing that I can do. I try to behave myself, and study and practise as I

should; but that seems selfish, after all. Rhoda, dear, I've heard how much you have done, and I want you to show me how to help somebody else."

Rhoda's eyes twinkled with two tear-drops. How ill she had judged her friend! How much lay beneath the laughter and light feet! She had struggled on amid discouragement to the Light ahead. How much more difficult her task than Rhoda's.

"When God thinks you need work to do, He will send it to you, Helen," said her friend. "Only keep on the watch, for you may not recognize it."

"Yes, but, Rhoda, I believe God sent you to show me some for that very reason. Where can I begin to do something for Him?" She stopped, and waited for Rhoda's reply.

"O, Helen, I feel so small beside you, so

unfit to show any path to one who has struggled so well."

"But, Rhoda, your feet have been where mine have not, and you know the way."

Rhoda thought a moment. "Did you not tell me this morning that your sister-in-law had a new German maid who had just come from her home?"

"Yes."

"Did it occur to you that she may be lonely, and will be glad to have some one talk with her about her home and friends?"

"No, I did not think of it; but I know it is so, for I saw her crying yesterday."

"There is a commencement then; and here is something more. There is an old lady who lives just beyond here, on the road that turns off at Hobson's corner, who would be very much cheered by a sight of your face and a few of your roses once in

a while. She and her husband are two lonely old people, and would be delighted to see you."

"Oh! thank you, Rhoda. I do so long to do something, and I have no one to talk to about it. Come."

She drew Rhoda to her little table, and kneeling upon a little stool in front of it, she began to pray for the strength of the dear Christ to help her to work for Him. To this Rhoda added a thanksgiving that they could talk together of Him.

It was not very strange that as Rhoda and Helen rode up to the farm-house door just before sunset, that Aunt Lottie thought it would be difficult to find two brighter faces anywhere. She came to the door-way as they halted. "Are you too weary to carry this down to the little brown house? Mrs. McClure's baby is ill, and she sent to ask for some milk."

“Certainly, auntie, I will go. Helen, do you want to ride just down the hill with me?”

Helen was quite ready; and the two girls set out. They drew their bridles before a tumble-down cottage, back a little from the road, in a hollow at the foot of the hill.

“Are you going in?” asked Helen.

“Yes; come with me.” Rhoda thought perhaps it would be a good thing for Helen to see the inside of another home, and did not heed her slight reluctance.

They went in at the open door, and found a dirty room with a few articles of furniture in it; a cupboard in one corner, containing dirty dishes, and a dirty woman sitting near a greasy stove, with a child lying across her lap. Nothing very poverty-stricken, but all revolting, because dirty and disagreeable. Helen stayed her foot just inside the door,

and Rhoda went forward. "Mrs. McClure, I'm very sorry the baby is ill," said she. "I've brought the milk, and auntie will give you more at any time. Have you any one to send for it?"

"No, miss, I've not," replied the woman; "but I'm just as much obliged for this."

"I'll come down with more to-morrow, then," said Rhoda. "This will keep until evening if you put it where it will be cool. Poor little baby!"

Rhoda knelt down by the woman's side, and looked into the tiny pale face. "Helen," she said, without turning her head, "come and see this pretty baby. It is a little pale to-day, but usually it is full of play."

Helen understood the intended hint, which said that she was standing too far off, and came quickly up to Rhoda. She even took one of the baby's hands in hers and admired

the little fingers. Rhoda talked of its liveliness and beauty; and the woman looked pleased with both the girls as they bent over the baby. As they came out they met an awkward farm-boy from the white house.

“Ah! Bob, how do you do? You are just in time to help us mount,” said Rhoda. She took the offered hand of the pleased boy, although it did not look quite clean, and mounted, taking occasion, as she did so, to enlist his services to bring the milk down for the baby the following day. He then hesitatingly offered help to Helen, who accepted it, because she did not know what else to do.

“Why did you ask him, Rhoda?” she said, when they were once more on the road. “We could have mounted without him.”

“Yes,” said Rhoda, “but did you see how pleased he looked because he was asked, and

my hands will wash. Besides, he will do a kind act to-morrow, which will be good for him."

Helen laughed. "I shall learn in time," she said. "I have had a delightful day, Rhoda."

They parted at the farm-gate; and as Rhoda gave her pony to the boy she lifted an anxious face to the heavens. The clouds, leaden and sullen-looking, were hanging over, and promised rain on the morrow. Rhoda watched them anxiously.

It did rain persistently all day Wednesday; and Rhoda was very much disappointed. As the clouds lifted a little towards night, the farm-boy came for the pail of milk, and Rhoda put on her waterproof and rubbers and accompanied him. The baby was better, and Mrs. McClure seemed glad to see a bright face. She felt repaid for her wet

walk ; and coming up the hill she met Jamie, who told her how much he had wanted to see her all day, and added, that his mother had consented to go as soon as there was a bright day. When Rhoda went upstairs to bed, the clouds were scattering and the moon riding through clear heavens.

Rhoda was full of her plans the next morning ; and as soon as the clock struck ten, she led the old farm-horse down to the white house to fasten him into their light two-seated carriage. Mrs. Randolph was all ready to go when the carriage was drawn to the door, and looked very cheerful. Jamie was as bright as the morning, and his eyes were filled with loving gladness as he looked at his mother. They wound slowly along the roads and through the woods, now in their full flush of summer beauty ; and the sweet fragrance wafted to them from the wild

flowers and the clear bird-notes which fell upon their ears, chimed in with the sorrowful lady's almost cheerful thoughts of her loved one who had gone.

When they drew near the farm-house, Mrs. Randolph's mind was filled with pleasant memories of days gone by, when she herself was a child there, or when Marie played beneath the trees. They were all happy memories; and she descended from the carriage almost smilingly to throw her arms around the old lady's neck.





CHAPTER XIV.

NEWS FROM HOME.

“Thou canst not tell where God will need thee next,
For His great Will may not be always clear.
Be sure of this: whene’er His message comes,
Thou mayst obey the bidding without fear.”



THEY went into the pleasant room,
and were made very welcome.
Mrs. Randolph could not content
herself in one place, but roamed from room
to room of the house, recalling by-gone
scenes, and recognizing pictures and articles
of furniture she had been accustomed to.
The sight of Marie’s picture saddened her,
and she talked of her dead child with tears;
but the joyful memories were more abundant,
and the visit proved a very pleasant one.

Rhoda noticed with a feeling of glad surprise a bouquet of sweet flowers on the table, which she knew could only have come from Mr. Bradley's greenhouse. As she stepped nearer to examine them, the old lady saw her. "A young lady brought those flowers this morning," she said. "She is a friend of yours; you seem to send or bring all the pleasant things."

Mrs. Randolph was so pleased with her visit — Rhoda could not help thinking it was because she was giving pleasure to some one else — that she stayed as long as she deemed prudent, and they were persuaded to remain to a lunch, and the afternoon was far spent before they set out for home. Rhoda was gratified to see how much Mrs. Randolph was learning to depend upon her boy, and how lovingly he rendered her every service she asked. They rode away finally, promising to

come soon again ; and Rhoda, watching the sun sinking toward the west, urged the old horse forward.

The rain of yesterday had left the roads in a very bad condition, and their progress was but slow. Finally, when they turned into the road which led by Cosy Nook, the old horse had as much as he could do to draw the carriage. As they came opposite the house, and Rhoda was looking out to see if Helen was in sight, "snap" went something, and the old horse stopped, evidently not against his will.

"What *is* the matter?" asked Mrs. Randolph in distress.

"I do not know," said Rhoda ; "nothing very serious, I presume."

She climbed from the wagon, and found, much to her dismay, that one of the shafts was broken close up to the body of the

carriage, and their progress was stayed. Rhoda's quick and ready judgment had to do her good service, and she had to decide what was best to be done before Mrs. Randolph — who was one of those people who lean upon the nearest thing at hand — could ask the all-important question, "What are we to do next?" A glance showed Rhoda that the fracture was not to be mended in an hour or two, and the only way was to entreat the assistance of her friends at Cosy Nook.

Accordingly, telling Jamie to stand by the horse's head, — although there was very little fear of his running, — she took her way carefully through the mud to the door of the house. It was opened by the servant, and she asked to see Mrs. Bradley.

"Will you step into the library, miss," said he, throwing open the door. Rhoda walked in, where Mrs. Bradley and Helen were seated.

Helen sprang up with an exclamation. "Mamma, see here is Rhoda," she cried.

"I'm in a sad predicament, Mrs. Bradley," said Rhoda. "We were riding out, and have broken our shaft just at your door, and I wish to ask you if you will allow my friends, Mrs. Randolph and her son, to come in and rest here while I ride old Dobbin down to the farm for another conveyance."

"Ask your friends in, of course," replied Mrs. Bradley. "Helen, run and tell Peter to go and help Rhoda."

Armed with a courteous message, Rhoda went back to the carriage, and told Mrs. Randolph quietly that friends of hers lived here, and they wished her to come in. "We shall have to have another carriage, so if you will alight I will arrange Dobbin for riding."

She directed Peter to draw the carriage out of the road and arrange the horse's sad-

dle so that she could ride him ; and then she took Mrs. Randolph and Jamie into the beautiful house, where they were made instantly at home.

Rhoda drew Mrs. Bradley aside, whispered who and what her friends were, and declared her plans. " I shall ride old Dobbin down and bring back the horse from the white house with our old carriage, which will be stronger. Then I shall ride my pony myself."

Mrs. Bradley was obliged to consent, as their horses were away and their coachman with them. " But you cannot ride with the harness on old Dobbin, Rhoda," she said.

Rhoda laughed ; and as the horse was brought, she led him up to the block, and with a little aid sat upon his bare back very easily.

" You will fall," said Mrs. Bradley, nervously.

“No,” said Rhoda, “Dobbin knows. If you will only take care of my friends I shall get along well enough.”

She rode off merrily, sitting on her dangerous seat and talking to old Dobbin.

Helen, who had looked on in amazement, now followed her mother into the house. She wondered if this was not one of the opportunities which she had been waiting for, and she did her utmost to make the time of waiting pass pleasantly. Mrs. Bradley also tried, for she felt a sympathy for the afflicted guest; but as Helen's motive was the best, so her work was more successful. Jamie was in raptures over the beautiful house and Rhoda's lovely friend; and by the time Rhoda returned on her pony, with the carriage and horse in charge of a farm-boy, she did not find them so anxiously watching for her return as she feared, for Mrs. Randolph

and Jamie were taking tea very cosily, and it was a bright face which that lady lifted to Rhoda as she came in. Mrs. Bradley detained Rhoda until she had taken something to eat and drink, and they were very merry in spite of the accident.

“Mrs. Bradley, how shall I thank you?” said Rhoda, as she shook hands with her on the step. “You have made Mrs. Randolph almost happy for the first time since her daughter’s death.”

“Do not thank me,” said Mrs. Bradley. “I could not help thinking what a terrible blank life would be to me if I should lose Helen; so I am glad to do all I can.”

Mrs. Randolph and Jamie were full of praises of the people they had left. “So kind, and courteous, and sympathizing,” said she. “I was really cheered and comforted. It has been almost the only pleasant day I

have had for months, and the accident rather improved it."

Rhoda's limbs were aching from the unusual ride on old Dobbin's back, and her head throbbed from over-anxiety; but she answered cheerfully and thankfully from her heart, "Then I am glad it happened."

Aunt Lottie looked grave when Rhoda came downstairs slowly after having refreshed herself with a change of dress. "The child looks pale," said the one auntie to the other. "I do not wish to give her the letter."

Aunt Martha met her as she came in. "You look rather more tidy than you did when you came in," she said. "Are you ready for a letter?"

"Yes," said Rhoda, eagerly.

"There is news in it," said auntie, cautiously; "that is, I suppose it is news; but marriages are no news often."

“Marriage,” echoed Rhoda. She opened and read the letter hastily, turned the leaf, finished it, and looked up to find the two aunties gazing at her. “How did you know?” she exclaimed.

“Your father has written us simply the fact, and said you would explain.”

Rhoda put her hand to her hot cheeks to cool them, and said, “The letter has been delayed. I’ve scarcely time to reach home.” Then she read:

“DEAR DAUGHTER, — Rather unexpectedly, Will is going to be married on the evening of the 15th. Of course we should like to have you come to the wedding, if you can get away. The final arrangements are sudden, and partially without my knowledge, or I should have written before. They will go to Washington, and return to live here; you

can go back to your aunt's after the wedding if you desire. You need not come if it is distasteful to you; but I should like to see you here. The bride-elect is Miss Morrison.

“ Affectionately, YOUR FATHER.”

“ That letter makes me shiver,” said Rhoda, again putting her hand to her hot cheeks. “ I never knew papa to write so before.”

“ Do you know this Miss Morrison ? ” asked Aunt Lottie.

“ Yes ; that is, I've seen her, but I never thought of Will's marrying her. It is so sudden.”

“ Will you go ? ” asked Aunt Martha.

“ Oh ! yes ; I must go by the morning stage ; I will go upstairs and collect some of my things.”

Aunt Martha, with eyes full of sympathy,

followed, and made her sit down while she put some clothing into a bag. "What shall I put in for the wedding?" asked auntie.

"The wedding? Oh!" said Rhoda, rousing up, "nothing, auntie, please. I've plenty of dresses at home, and never mind the rest to-night. I'm so tired, I'll rise early and finish them."

Aunt Martha stopped out of pity for the weary child, who sat holding her head with her hand, and rocking back and forth. She came to her tenderly, loosened her dress, and brushed her hair. "It is a surprise to you, is it not, Rhoda?" she asked.

"Very great," said Rhoda; "and I do not want to go now when I am doing so much."

Aunt Martha left her; and by and by, when the weary, throbbing head was laid upon the pillow, she appeared again at the bedside. "You are shivering and burning

both at once," she said. "Lift your head, and drink this."

Rhoda raised her head obediently, and drank. She never knew what it was, but she said afterwards it seemed a mixture of honey and spices, and she fell asleep almost immediately.

The question of the journey settled itself. Rhoda was far too ill to move the next morning, and raised herself only to lie down again. "I cannot go, auntie," she said, and burst into tears.

She lay there, weak and feverish, her eyes wandering about the room and out of the window, and her aunts watching her and waiting upon her for two weeks. She dictated a letter to her father telling him she was a little ill, so that the aunties thought she ought not to come.

Aunt Lottie declared there should be no

burdens borne now, for she must not think of anybody but herself; but when she said, "Dear auntie, tell Jamie to take my pony and go and see the old folks in the wood;" or, "Please ask Mrs. Randolph to come and see me;" or, "Do tell Helen to go down to Mrs. McClure's once in a while," they were fain to obey her.

She felt very restless under the restraint, and it was as much as she could do to be patient; but the fever which had touched her kept her a prisoner, and she lay looking out upon the green fields, and longing to have a part in the summer glory. Jamie was disconsolate; and Aunt Martha laughingly said that he sat on the door-steps of the farmhouse almost all the time asking at intervals of fifteen minutes how Rhoda was. Mrs. Randolph came to see her two or three times; and Helen came down one day

in the carriage, bringing the old lady from the farm in the woods. Rhoda's room was kept supplied with flowers. She saw how the world of the woods was growing from the specimens Jamie sent in, and Mrs. Bradley's conservatories were constantly represented.

The first day that she was able to sit up, there came a letter from her father that almost sent her back again. There was nothing sorrowful about it; but, as Rhoda said again, "so unlike papa." "Your brother and sister have returned," he wrote, "and report a pleasant trip. I am grieved to hear that you have been ill, and I think you are not quite fit for school yet, so perhaps you had better remain through September, and perhaps longer, at Little Commons. I long to see my 'darling, and perhaps I may run down for a day or two; but unless it is very

repugnant to you, I desire that you remain. I have written a short note to Aunt Lottie. Floy — whose happy face is the best sunshine I have seen this many a day — came in here last week, and sends you much love.”

“Rhoda, I do not think you should allow your papa’s letter to trouble you,” said Aunt Lottie. “We are only too glad to have you longer with us; and if papa needed you he would ask you to return.” Secretly, she thought Mr. Rushton had done perfectly right in insisting that Rhoda should remain; and Rhoda, for her part, would much rather have done so if she could have felt certain that all was right at home.

It took longer to recover than Rhoda at first imagined; and after she was well enough to sit in a chair by the window, it was fully three weeks before she could mount her pony again, and even then she was not her old self

The fulness of summer was past; they were in August days, and the blackberries were ripening on all the hills. Rhoda and Jamie were out with their baskets, the latter delighted to have Rhoda's companionship again. He had changed greatly of late, was far more cheerful and happy than formerly, and showed in his whole manner that it had given him a spur to effort to feel that his mother looked to him for company and help; and Rhoda was always so pleased to have him for a companion. Helen Bradley, her constant friend, came to take her to ride now and then, and was her messenger with baskets of blackberries for the old couple. Helen was doing a good work for her sister's maid, who was a poor lonely girl, and very ignorant. She spoke of the emigrant's gratitude to Rhoda with her eyes full of tears. Mrs. Randolph allured Rhoda to the

white house, and in her efforts to please her young guest forgot her own grief.

So Rhoda recovered, and found her work coming back to her hands, for Helen said there was trouble at home which kept her there, and Mrs. McClure's baby was ill again. Jamie was attending the district school, and was very much puzzled with his tasks. Another niece of Aunt Lottie's—a very little girl—had come to pay a visit at the farmhouse, and, being full of life and fun, occupied all of Rhoda's leisure time, so that the busy heart, intent upon the Master's work, was full once more with thought for others.





CHAPTER XV.

SWEET FLOWERS.

“Children of God, like lilies of the valley, flourish best in lowly situations.”

EARLY in September, Mr. Rushton came down to Little Commons for two days. He seemed sober and almost low-spirited, and Rhoda was pained and troubled by the change. She took him over to Cosy Nook to see her friends, the Bradleys, and he was charmed by the pretty place. “Ah! Rhoda,” said he, “if you and I only had this place to ourselves, how happy we should be;” and he sighed. Rhoda felt that there was something at home which she

did not understand, and she almost wished she could go back and be a comfort to her father. Mr. Rushton evidently had no such intention, but left her at the stage-door without fixing any time for her return.

The morning after his departure was bright and mild, and Rhoda suggested to her aunt at breakfast that she should go down to Mrs. McClure's with a fresh pitcher of milk. Aunt Martha consented gladly, the more so, as she felt that any change would benefit Rhoda. So she filled the pitcher, and Rhoda set off down the hill with her heart full of her father and his troubles. She soon forgot all this, however, in her dismay and distress at the condition of things at the cottage. She found the door shut, and no answer was returned to her knock, so she pushed it open gently and went in. Mrs. McClure sat leaning her head upon the table, and took no notice of Rhoda;

but on a rude lounge near her Rhoda saw the cause of her indifference. The little child for whom she had brought comfort lay there, but beyond the reach of Rhoda's help. The white face had a new whiteness, and the dimpled arms would never move again; the lids were closed over the tiny eyes; the baby was dead.

Rhoda uttered an exclamation of sorrow; and the poor woman turned her head upon her arm with a moan. The young visitor stood a few minutes looking at the attempts which had been made toward the adornment of the little body; and, perceiving how the mother's heart had longed to do more than her means allowed, Rhoda's heart ached for her. Then, with a sudden thought, she set down the pitcher she had carried and went out without speaking to any one. She ran up the hill again, and in at the farm-gate. Seeing the farm-boy lingering at the barn-

door, she called to him to put the saddle upon Fun, as she was going out to ride. She hastened in-doors, and telling Aunt Lottie the state of things at the cottage, she begged from her a sheet and a little pillow. "I will take them as I return," she said; "I am going over to Cosy Nook now." She ran out, sprang upon Fun's back, and he was soon galloping down the south road, leaving a trail of dust behind him. She drew bridle at the house, and Helen ran out. "Dear Rhoda, this is an unexpected pleasure," she said; but Rhoda's face stopped her. "What is the matter?" she asked anxiously.

"Mrs. McClure's baby is dead," replied Rhoda, "and the poor woman has nothing with which to prepare the little body for its rest, and I came to beg some flowers and your help, if you will give it."

Helen gladly consented; and they were

soon in the conservatory, winding in and out, breathing the air heavy-laden with perfume, and cutting flowers, sweet blossoms which were but emblems of the little blossom thus faded before its time. Helen ordered her pony, and with a basket for their flowers, they set off for the cottage, only stopping at the farm-gate, where Aunt Martha stood with her white bundle. Rhoda opened the cottage-door this time, and went in. The mother was not there, but the little body still lay upon the couch in the corner. Rhoda drew the table to one side of the room and covered it with the sheet Aunt Martha had given her, pinning it closely and neatly; after which she laid the little pillow upon it. Helen watched her, and almost drew back when Rhoda went to the lounge and gently lifted the little form and placed it on the table.

“O Rhoda!” she exclaimed.

“Is it not beautiful?” replied Rhoda, intending to understand her friend as she thought best. “I feel so honored to lift the little body when I know the soul is with God now. Dear baby! Will you please help me, Helen?”

Helen, a little ashamed, drew nearer, and they arranged the flowers they had brought. They looped sprays of smilax from the corners of the table, and fastened them with white asters. Around the little form they laid mignonette, and sweet pale purple heliotrope, with fragrant leaves. A few sweet rose-buds were placed in the little hands, and upon the long night-dress they laid a magnificent spray of white lilies. The flowers that remained were laid in the form of a wreath at its feet; and then, Rhoda's task of love completed, she moved about the room setting things to rights. When she had done this she stood looking about.

“Helen,” she said, “is it not curious and very touching, that the purest and most beautiful thing in all this miserable house is that little body from which the spirit has departed?”

Helen stood speechless. This was a new experience for her; it was her first sight of death,—would that to all the first coming of the Reaper could be as peaceful!—and she was awed; not by the terror of death, or its stern sorrow and anguish, but by the exceeding beauty of *this* which seemed truly a falling asleep, to awake glorified.

Rhoda came stooping near her to arrange some flowers which had drooped, when the door opened, and the poor stricken mother crept slowly in. Attracted by the presence of the two girls she came forward, and saw in an instant the work they had done.

She burst into tears. This woman, who

had not wept for days, now wept at the touching beauty of the child and the loving thoughts which had prompted the adornment. Helen wiped her own eyes, and could only wonder. Presently, Mrs. McClure turned away, and going to the half-open door, called to some one within. There was a heavy step, and her husband came across the threshold. He gave a glance at the two girls, and then at the beautifully arranged body. He was a rude, rough man, coarse and uncared-for; but when he saw what had been done, two tears rolled down his cheeks too, and were brushed off with the back of a dirty hand.

Rhoda touched the flowers softly. "We thought," she said, in a low, sweet voice, "that as baby was in heaven this morning, we would bring some sweet flowers to place about its body, so that this room might seem

as near as possible like baby's new home. It is very happy, while we are sorry."

"It does not seem like death," said Helen, finding her voice. "It seems as if the baby had fallen asleep in a bed of sweet flowers; and I have no doubt it feels just so to fall asleep in God's arms."

The mother sobbed more quietly, and the father looked down upon the little child with a face which showed that all the good in him was uppermost, and the bad had fled in terror.

Rhoda came up to him softly. "If you wish our horse and carriage, Mr. McClure, Aunt Lottie bade me say you were quite welcome to them to-day or to-morrow; and if there is any thing further we can do, we hope you will let us know."

The rough man took the timid little hand outstretched to him, and said huskily, "You are very kind." The woman turned suddenly

as they were quietly leaving the room. "It is beautiful," she said hurriedly, "and baby and I are so much obliged for" — she choked and broke down. Thus the two girls left her, and rode silently up the hill.

There were but few words exchanged as they parted at the gate, and Rhoda spent the day over a drawing she had commenced before she was ill. Aunt Lottie went down to the cottage in the afternoon, and when she returned she came behind Rhoda's chair, and, bending over her, kissed her gently.

"I found your footprints at the cottage," she said, "and they were like the steps of ministering spirits. The sting of death is no longer there, and the mother is glad to sit near the baby and look upon it. She said that you or Helen had spoken of its falling asleep on a bed of flowers, and she had thought of nothing else all day."

Two days afterwards, as Michael McClure and his wife rode into the village cemetery, with the little coffin on the seat between them, they were joined by two other persons. Rhoda and Helen, on their ponies, rode behind the carriage, and stopped near the little grave. Mr. Dodds came and spoke a few words, and asked God to comfort the bereaved ones, and then went away. Helen placed some fresh flowers on the small mound, and then the two riders followed the carriage back to the cottage. They did not stop there, and perhaps Mrs. McClure did not see them at all; but, if I do not mistake, she saw all,—the bowed heads, the grave faces, and the sympathy which led them to the last kind act; and I think if, in her after-life, those above her in position treated her harshly or unkindly, a remembrance would soften bitter words that sprang to her lips,

and the offenders would escape with less censure than they deserved.

The grief of the stricken family, the want of happiness at home, of which her father's letters hinted, together with the weakness that illness had left behind, made Rhoda take a despondent view of things about this time. She was busy enough, and spent hours on horseback or amusing her little cousin at the farm. Aunt Lottie heard now and then of some cheering visit she had made, or some kind message she had carried, but she did not return cheerfully to her home; and it was a very grave face which was seen in the twilight of the beautiful September evenings at the open door. She complained to auntie that there seemed to be so much to do for others which was beyond her reach, that she was discouraged.

One night she had been sitting motionless

on the door-step for an hour; and many an anxious glance had gone that way from the kitchen, where the aunties were busy, when suddenly she was called.

She answered, and, rising quickly, came through the sitting-room and appeared at the kitchen door. A young lady sat by the table, talking to Aunt Lottie, and as Rhoda appeared she said, "I wish you to know Miss Bedford, Rhoda, because she is Jamie's teacher."

"Jamie is very much interested in his school, and tells me long stories about it," said Rhoda.

Miss Bedford turned and lifted her head. Rhoda almost started. She had great, lustrous black eyes, full of a wistful longing for something far beyond her reach, and, at the same time, her mouth had a sweet smile lingering about, which belied the eyes, being full of calm content.

"Have you been in the school-room until this hour?" asked Aunt Lottie.

"Yes, I am early to-night; I usually wait for the stage and ride down, but to-night I walked, as I wished to reach home earlier, and I stopped here to rest. Miss Rhoda, I came partly to see you," she said, turning toward her. "Jamie tells me you play upon the piano, and I thought to ask you to be kind enough to explain some music I have here. You must not think I can play," she added timidly, "but mother has an old piano which was hers before she was married, and I am trying to teach myself to play."

Rhoda felt very shy of teaching any thing to one so much her senior; she bent over the music, and then began gently to explain, using her hands upon the table in mute playing.

“If you have never heard the music, I will come and play it for you any time,” said Rhoda; “I often ride by your house.”

The sweet mouth smiled, and the dark eyes looked more wistful. “It is such a poor piano,” she said, shaking her head.

“Never mind,” said Rhoda, “to-morrow is Saturday, and I will come. Shall it be in the morning or afternoon?”

“Oh! thank you, if you will really come, in the afternoon, if you please.”

“How do you enjoy your school, Lucy?” asked Aunt Lottie.

“Very much. The children are quiet and teachable, and are so fond of me, it is quite astonishing. I must go now, indeed, for mother will be looking for me.”

She took leave, and it seemed to Rhoda as if the sunlight had gone out of the house. She stood idly watching Aunt Lottie at her

churning, and wondering what made the young teacher's face so peaceful.

Suddenly the churning stopped. "Lucy is like a story in a book," said Aunt Lottie, as she lifted the top of the churn and looked in.

"How?" asked Rhoda.

"Because her life has been rather a romance; she was all ready to go away to school two years ago, had studied hard, and was quite prepared to enter an advanced class, when suddenly her father, who was a fisherman, was drowned off the coast, and her brother, to whom she sent for help, was killed while on his way here. This left Lucy with her mother and two little orphan nieces to care for, and no money to do it with. They had a cow; and for a while Lucy took in sewing, and sold milk and butter and eggs. The old mother became blind, and then the care of the children fell upon Lucy. There was no

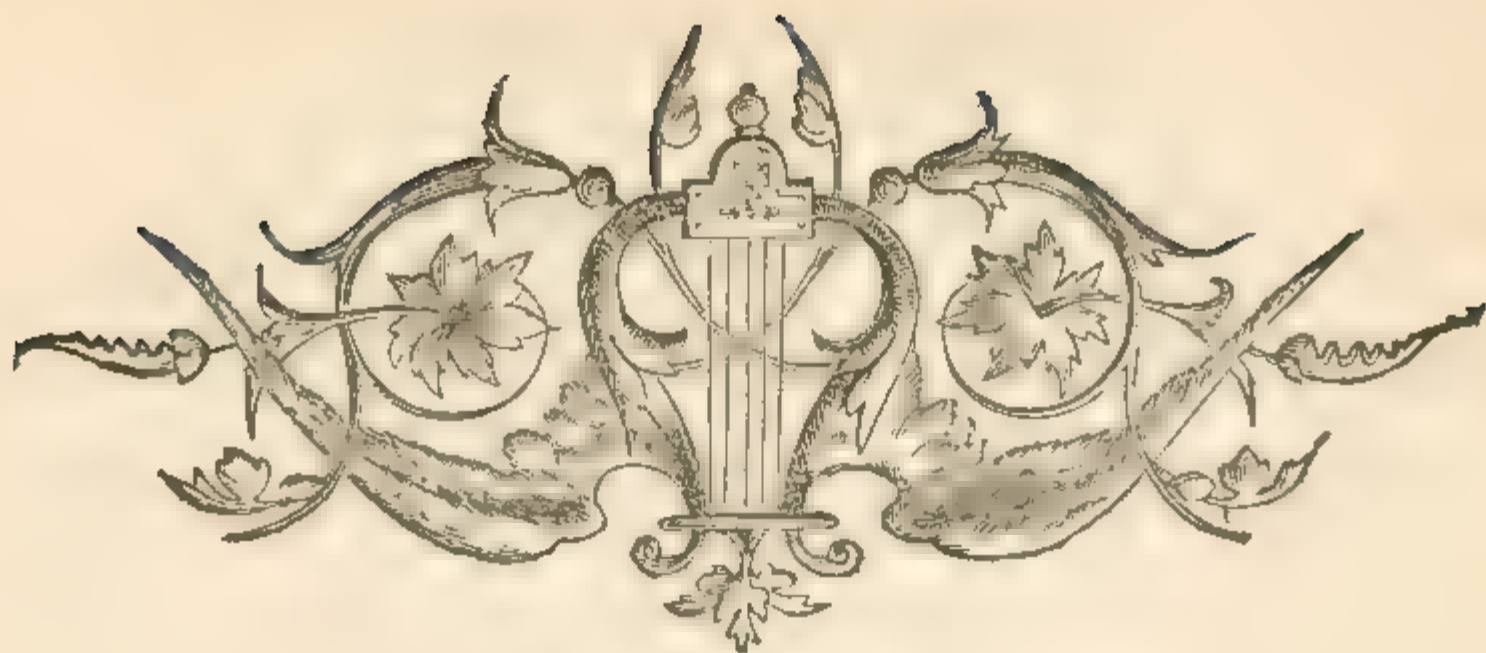
more thought of school; all her bright dreams had to be relinquished; and when this place, as district-school teacher, was offered her, she accepted it. Now she has to take care of the old lady and two children, to milk the cow night and morning, to do the household work, and teach six hours a day. With all this labor, I have never seen her in the least despondent or without that sunny smile, although she has had to give up all her hopes for the future. It is a very prosaic romance, Rhoda, but it seems to me very grand. And now she is going to learn music. Well, I've no doubt but what she will succeed. I wonder what she would think of such a life as yours or Helen Bradley's. She told me once that she always felt that God was on her side, so there was no room for despondency."

Rhoda watched her slight figure going down the south road with a firm step; she

recalled the smiling mouth and the wistful eyes, and she thought of the hopes resigned, the plans thwarted, of trouble endured, and of the daily toil stretching out into the future. With it all she compared her own life, and all the blessings heaped upon her; and her own late desponding thoughts came up to rebuke her.

No one knew her to show any discouragement after that night.





CHAPTER XVI.

THE END OF THE BUSY DAY.

“My soul bethought of this :
In just that very place of His
Where He hath put and keepeth you,
God hath no other thing to do.”

RHODA spent a very busy day once, not long after the events recorded in the last chapter. She sat working for an hour after breakfast over a drawing of the old house in the woods, which she intended to present to her friends there. Then Aunt Lottie sent her into the orchard to gather apples, and as she returned she brought Fun from the meadow. After he was saddled, she laid her drawing in a little basket and set off

upon what she called a "riding ramble." The old couple were delighted to see her, and surprised and pleased with the picture. They had a visitor, or at least Rhoda supposed her to be such, until they told her the little girl was a grandchild. Her parents were going far away to China, and had left her to spend the winter with the old folks. "I'm afraid she'll be real lonely," said the old lady, "for she is used to having young folks about, and she cries a good deal. I'm real glad you came to-day; it will cheer her up a bit."

Rhoda had the little girl on her lap in a few minutes, and asked her if she liked to swing.

"Oh! yes," replied the little one, rousing up.

"Well, when you come down to see me some day soon, we will have a swing in the barn, and when we are tired, there are pict-

ures and books to look at, and a paint-box and brush."

The child's eyes sparkled.

"I've an old cat at home," continued Rhoda; "and I'll tell you what she did the other day."

The child listened delighted, and even the older ones had ears for the cat's adventure. The merry laugh which rung out cheered Aunt Esther. "The child has not been so happy since she came," she said. "Come again, come again, girl," the little one cried out, as she held open the gate for Rhoda.

"Yes," replied Rhoda, "soon again." She rode through the woods, now brilliant with October foliage, the maples and evergreens laying their leaves against the deep brown of the oak, while the low huckleberry bushes made a bed of scarlet and green and gold, until they seemed copies of the trees above.

The air was smoky with a slight breeze, with just a promise of frost in it, which told of winter to come.

Rhoda thought how much there was for her to do here, and how her heart was becoming entwined around the people of the little village. "I shall not want to go back," she said to herself, "and I hope papa will not send for me until spring."

Coming out upon the high-road, she stopped at the Bradleys' gate. She had been there often of late, and was a privileged guest. She ran in without ringing, and sought Helen in her room. She found her busy at her desk.

"Rhoda," she said laughingly, "you come,

'Like pleasant thoughts, when such are wanted.'

I never see a bright face but yours. Something is the matter in the house, and I don't know what it is. Father is cross and mother

is worried, and the servants are echoes of them. I am all out of sorts myself, because I don't know what is the matter. You have come to spend the day and comfort me, of course."

"No; I've only come to see your mother,—and you, also," she added, "for I shall want your help, if your mother consents."

"What is it?" asked Helen; but Rhoda only asked her where her mother was, and drew her downstairs.

"Mrs. Bradley, I've come this morning asking favors again," she said, when they reached the library. "Lucy Bedford, the teacher of the district school, who lives just below here, is trying to learn to play on the piano. She has a jungling old instrument, which was her mother's, I believe, although it might easily have been her great-grandmother's. She is practising so faithfully upon it, and seems to

be so pleased with her own progress, that I have been thinking what a great pleasure it would be to her to hear yours. May I bring her up here this afternoon, Mrs. Bradley? and, Helen, will you play for her?"

Mrs. Bradley listened smilingly. "You always have a project for the benefit of somebody else, child," she said; "when are you going to begin upon yourself? Certainly, bring the young lady; but why does not some one give her a decent piano?"

"Madam,—Mrs. Bradley!" exclaimed Rhoda; and sitting down on a rug which lay at Mrs. Bradley's feet, she told them Lucy's story.

They were silent when she finished, and each took a lesson to herself. "When I hear such a thing as that," said Mrs. Bradley at last, "I feel as if I would like to be hidden somewhere,—thrown aside with the rest of

the rubbish. What are we in view of a life-work like this?"

"She asks me to teach her sometimes," said Rhoda, "as if I could teach that woman any thing. I feel guilty every moment I do it, and want to sit at her feet and learn. There is your lunch-bell. I must go."

But they would not allow that, and kept her. After it was over, she went out on foot to the house at Gibson's Corner. Lucy was sewing busily at an open window. Rhoda accosted her, and then asked if she was too busy to walk a short distance. She shook her head doubtfully, and held up the unfinished stocking she was at work upon.

"I have been at Cosy Nook, and I thought perhaps you would like to return with me, and try Helen's piano."

"Ah! how pleasant that would be!" exclaimed Lucy, wistfully; and then, looking

down at the lap full of work, she shook her head again.

“Only for an hour,” urged Rhoda, “and then I will come back with you, and help you finish the stockings. The piano is new, and very sweet-toned, and Helen plays finely.”

Lucy rose slowly and laid aside her work. She took her hat, and Rhoda could almost see her eyes brighten as she stepped out into the open air. “You are so good,” she said, with a sigh of pleasure.

“I do not give anybody any credit for giving you pleasure; it is sheer duty, to say nothing of the enjoyment,” said Rhoda.

Lucy opened her great eyes and asked her what she meant, but she would not explain.

In the drawing-room they found Helen, who held out her hand timidly, and looked

almost reverently at Lucy. The beautiful piano was opened, and Rhoda sat down and played one of Lucy's favorite airs.

"Ah! how peaceful and restful that is!" she exclaimed. "It seems to drive every care away." She sat a short distance from the instrument, and begged them to go on when they paused. Helen and Rhoda played together and separately, and sang also. By and by they asked her to play. "Helen wishes to hear you," said Rhoda, as she drew back. "If it will please you, certainly," she said; and immediately went to the stool. Her habit of touching the keys of her harsh instrument softly, to prevent the harsh twanging of certain strings, made the notes respond lovingly to her touch. The tears were in her eyes as she finished. "I knew that air was lovely," she said, "but I did not think it would sound so. Ah! I have learned so

much to-day," she said at last, as she rose to go. "I shall dream about those sweet airs. How can I thank you enough?"

As they were crossing the hall on their way out, Mrs. Bradley opened the library door. She came forward as soon as she saw the group. "Rhoda tells me you are fond of music, Miss Bedford," she said. "I hope you will consider my piano quite at your service, and the front door always stands open. Come in at any time, and practise as much as you wish."

The great, grave eyes looked their gratitude as the mouth said the words; and Mrs. Bradley could not decide which spoke the more eloquently.

Rhoda would stay and mend the stockings, although Lucy tried to persuade her not. "You have rested me so much that I can work ten times faster," she said; but Rhoda

liked to stay, and so the work was completed.

Rhoda went away with a full heart. She had actually been able to help her,—this brave woman, who had dared to face the world with two hands and a brain, and work her way through it, trusting in the great pitiful Hand above to keep harm away.

Down to the west road and so home was Rhoda's way, that she might call at Mrs. McClure's and leave some flowers Helen had sent to place upon the baby's grave, and at Mrs. Randolph's to ask Jamie to ride down to Sunday-school with her the next day.

"Ah! what a happy face," said Aunt Lottie, as she came in. "You have been doing good to-day."

Rhoda laughed, and sat down by the cat on the lounge. Pussy stirred, and crept closer to her.

“ I’ve had a good day, auntie, and I’m very strong again,” said Rhoda. “ I’m not in the least tired to-night. Fun is, however. Will Gregory be here soon to put him up ? ”

“ Yes, he has gone to the village for the mail, and here he comes now ? ”

The boy came stamping in and laid the letters on the table. Rhoda sprang up and took one from the bundle. “ This is for me,” she said, and ran off to the front doorway to read it.

Presently she returned with a slow step, and put the letter into Aunt Lottie’s hand. “ Papa wants me to come home by the Monday stage,” she said ; “ you can read what he says.” She went back to the lounge again, and looked intently out of the window into the meadow.

Aunt Lottie read it through. “ I have been expecting this,” she said gravely ; “ the

stage leaves at eight o'clock on Monday morning."

"Then you think I ought to go, auntie?"

"Certainly, my dear, although it goes to the bottom of my heart to lose you."

Rhoda furtively wiped away two tears, and continued to gaze into the meadow. Aunt Martha came in, was told of the news, and the two aunties consulted together, but Rhoda never stirred.

"Auntie," she said at length, "I suppose I am very wrong, but I cannot see why God is just now taking me away from all my work. I know papa wants me, and I feel sure I can help him a little, but I have so many interests here, so many little burdens I can help to carry, that I feel as if my hands were empty. I know I am being led by God, but why does He take me away from the work He has given me?"

"God has all the worlds in charge, Rhoda, and He gathereth up the waters in the hollow of His hand; yet I believe He knows just where Rhoda Rushton is needed, and why it is good for her to go from here."

"But, auntie, if *I* could only know."

"You will, by and by, Rhoda; and you will see then that God knows best. Your father cannot want you more than I do, but I think he needs you more. I think you will find work to do at home."

Soothed by Aunt Lottie's words, Rhoda was fain to be content; but she begged that they would not mention her proposed departure. Accordingly, she went with Jamie to Sunday-school the next morning, chatting merrily. She nodded to Mrs. McClure as she passed the house, exchanged a greeting with Helen in the church-porch, and smiled at Lucy across the pews. She rode home in

the old farm-carriage cheerfully, and no one knew what a timid, trembling heart beat underneath the smiling exterior. No one knew how especially dear every house and tree and fence had become to her, and how she was mutely bidding farewell to all about her.

“I must breathe in all the fresh air I can, auntie,” she said, “for we have nothing so pure at home,” and her lip trembled.

She was up bright and early the next morning, putting away her treasures. Aunt Martha said she cared more for her ferns and mosses than for her wardrobe. They rode down to the stage-office, and Rhoda took leave of her aunts with tears. The stage started, and she felt herself being carried away from the scenes which had grown so very, very dear to her.

At a point where the stage-road crossed another, they were stopped by a boy who had a bundle to give to the driver; and, looking

out, Rhoda saw that it was Jamie. He did not recognize her for a moment, and then he suddenly exclaimed:

“Rhoda, *where* are you going?”

“Home,” said Rhoda. “I could not tell you yesterday.”

“When are you coming back?”

“I don’t know,” she replied, sadly.

“O Rhoda! I thought I had you for the winter. What shall I do?” said the boy, sorrowfully. Just then the coach started. “Good by,” he said, reaching up his hand; “I shall miss you every day.” Rhoda could only lean back, as he disappeared, and wipe away the tears.

“Is that your little beau?” asked a gentleman on the opposite seat.

“No, sir,” said Rhoda, darting an indignant glance at him out of her flashing eyes. The tears were driven away quickly, and her irrita-

tion at what she called "that silly man" kept her mind and body awake during the long journey. More tedious than ever it proved to be, for they met with some mishap which so delayed them that it was nightfall when they entered the city. At last they were in the paved streets, and Rhoda recognized the rough stones by the jolting they gave her. They stopped at the door of her father's house, and the light of welcome streamed out into the street. "I am glad, indeed, to see you, Rhoda," said her father, clasping her in his arms.

And Rhoda was at home again.





CHAPTER XVII.

AT HOME.

“Into the life, so poor and hard and plain,
Which for awhile they must take up again,
My presence passes. Where their feet toil slow,
Mine, shining swift with love, still foremost go.”



AFTER all, there was some comfort. The house was bright and warm, and glowing with the rich furnishing which Rhoda did not remember as so pleasant to the eye. Her new sister, stately and graceful, greeted her with an affectionate kiss, and led her into the library. It was less a library now, and more of a sitting-room. The study-table had been pushed back into the corner, and the books piled upon it as if

to get them out of the way. A tall work-stand occupied one side of the fireplace, and a painting easel stood by the window. Will lay upon a sofa, and greeted her gaily.

“Tired of the country, are you, sis?” he said.

“No, indeed,” she replied earnestly.

Her father was anxious to hear how she had spent her time, and soon drew her off to the other side of the room. They went out to tea presently, and it seemed strange to Rhoda to have Adele (Will’s wife) take the place she had occupied ever since her mother’s death. The new mistress did not seem to notice it, however, but presided elegantly. Papa saw Rhoda’s glance, and called her to a seat at his right hand. “After I married your mamma, Rhoda,” he said, in a voice which could reach her ear alone, “we went to live for a short time in my father’s

house, and then she occupied the seat you have now."

Rhoda smiled, and looked quite content. After the meal was over, they returned to the library; and soon after some callers were announced, and shown in. They were guests of Adele and Will, and Rhoda was not even presented. Presently two others were announced, and Rhoda sat watching and listening with great interest. She soon perceived that her father was not in the room. She waited some time, and finding he did not return, she left the room to seek him. She found him in his own apartment, writing by an old study-table which had long ago been banished from the library. He had ordered a fire kindled, and it was just burning up. He looked lonely, and the room was cold and cheerless. Rhoda noticed all this at a glance. "Papa," she said, "may I stay here?"

“Certainly, dear. You are not tired of the company so soon, are you?” he replied, wheeling his chair from the table for her to occupy.

“I do not care for them, papa. I only wish to be where you are. Go on with your work.”

Her father rubbed his hands together and looked pleased. He stood talking to her a few minutes, and then returned to his table. Rhoda took up a paper which lay near, and busied herself with it until her father was again at liberty. “Here is a very interesting article on the ‘Paris of to-day,’ papa,” she said; “shall I read it to you?”

“I should like to hear it very much,” he replied, throwing himself back in his chair. “I have had no one to read to me since you went away.”

Rhoda commenced, and read, in a clear, mellow voice, the really interesting article,

and her father looking pleased and contented, she continued to read column after column until it was quite late.

"There, child, you must not read any more," said Mr. Rushton, rousing as the clock struck ten. "I have enjoyed listening so much that the time has flown away."

"Papa, if I am to go to school again," said Rhoda, folding up the paper, "I shall need a place to study, and the library is occupied now; besides, I would much rather be with you. If we could convert this into a study, and bring up the library-table, it would make one of the pleasantest rooms in the house."

"Nothing would please me better," replied her father. "Order Jones to bring up the table; and do any thing you wish in *my* rooms. I am afraid, however, that you will soon weary of my poor company."

Rhoda replied with her arms round his

neck and her face close to his, and ran off to her room.

In the morning, she attacked the library-table. It was piled high with books, for which she sought places among the shelves. Adele came in while she was working, and, sinking into an easy chair, asked languidly what she was doing.

“Papa wishes this table in his room, and I’m trying to put away the books,” she said.

Adele said nothing, but sat watching her, and presently began to suggest, and then to order the placing of the books. Rhoda obeyed silently, but when, to please a whim of the lady, she changed one large volume three times, her cheek began to burn. The work of an hour thus occupied three, and when, at last, the table was cleared, and Jones had carried it upstairs, Rhoda was ready to cry with vexation. She rejoiced,

however, that she had not spoken an ill-natured word, for Adele did not realize how she annoyed the poor child.

Rhoda made a complete revolution in papa's room. She brought a bronze lamp from the library, and exchanged the lounge for one from her own room much larger and more comfortable. She had the room thoroughly swept and arranged, and warm curtains hung at the windows. She placed her own rocking-chair by the hearth, and ordered a roaring fire built in the grate.

"What is the child doing?" exclaimed Adele, stopping at the door as Rhoda was putting the finishing touches.

"Papa wished me to arrange his room."

"The servants could have done it," said Adele.

"Not as I wish," answered Rhoda.

About half an hour later Rhoda came into

the library in her riding-habit. Adele looked up from her worsted work with a little frown. "Ah! look here," she exclaimed, "I have worked this pattern wrong, and I cannot find my mistake."

Rhoda came forward and took up the work.

"Surely you are not going to ride this cold day," said Adele, noticing her dress.

"Yes, I'm going up to the stone cottage, if I have time," replied Rhoda, glancing at the clock.

"Do help me out of this mistake before you go," urged Adele, selfishly.

Rhoda looked over the work, and in a few minutes showed Adele where she had taken the wrong stitch. "All this to pick out!" she exclaimed. "O Rhoda! stay and help me do it."

Rhoda opened her lips with an excuse, but closed them again, and began to pick out

the work. Adele helped feebly for a few minutes, but soon sank back, saying it tired her eyes, and watched Rhoda as she patiently ripped away the closely set stitches. The short day was drawing to a close when she finished, and Adele had fallen asleep in her chair.

Rhoda laid the work in her lap, and, with a little sigh, went upstairs and took off her habit. She stood by her window a few minutes, gravely looking out upon the little cottage where Floy had been with a wistful face, which told how much she wanted to go to her friend. But presently she saw papa coming up the street, so she ran downstairs and into the newly arranged room, and was in her own chair sewing busily when he came in. She sprang to meet him; and as he held her he looked about with a pleased smile. "You certainly have made a new room of it, Rhoda,"

he said. She led him to the fire, and gave him his slippers and the evening paper. "This is to be our parlor, papa," she said, gaily. "We only need some flowers and pictures to make it perfect." She rolled his chair to the fire, and he sank down in it with a sigh of relief. "There is a letter from Aunt Patty in my side-pocket," he said. "I believe she wants you there to spend the day to-morrow. I told her I could spare you in the day-time, but not in the evening."

Rhoda laughed gleefully, and read the note.

"It was a good thing I did not go this afternoon," she said to herself. "God always orders for the best; I should have remembered that."

Rhoda kept out of Adele's way the next morning, and was out of the house, and off towards the stone cottage long before noon. She was joyously welcomed when she reached

there. Floy's eyes fairly shone with pleasure, and Ally sprang up and down, clapping his hands and shouting. Aunt Patty, with her baby on her arm, made her welcome, and Rhoda was at home. To be one of such a happy family was in itself a comfort. Rhoda looked and listened with a glad heart. She told them of her summer journey, and of the pleasures left behind at Little Commons. She spoke of Mrs. McClure's baby, and Aunt Patty drew the baby closer, and her lip quivered. She told of Miss Bedford, and Floy caught her breath and said, "I wish I could know her." After dinner, she had a race with Ally through the house, and finally sank down, exhausted and laughing, in the sewing-room, where Floy sat with a piece of work in her lap. Aunt Patty called Ally away, and the two girls were left alone together.

"What a happy home this is, Floy," said

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Rhoda. "You must have shining days always."

"I do," replied Floy, and her great eyes looked the truth of what she said; "but I am beginning to find myself in the way, Rhoda."

"How can that be? I know Aunt Patty likes you."

"Yes; but the baby is so large now that Ally can have his mamma's care; and, more than that, I accidentally overheard your uncle say that the times were hard, and he hoped Aunt Patty would reduce the expenses if possible; and then I heard my name. If I could only get a place to teach I should be so glad."

Rhoda sighed. "Have you been studying?" she asked.

"Yes, I studied in your library a great deal before your brother's marriage."

"Why did you give it up, then?" asked Rhoda.

Floy flushed. "I did not think I was quite welcome after that," she said. She would have been very sorry to have told Rhoda what a rebuff she did receive. Rhoda looked troubled and puzzled. "I've no doubt you'll be welcome here as long as you choose to remain," she said; "but I will think about the matter."

She rode back late in the afternoon very thoughtfully. Nothing seemed quite happy and at rest; even at the stone cottage there was anxiety; and Rhoda was at a loss as to how she could mend the matter. When she entered the house, she sought the only place which still retained a semblance of old times,—the sunny corner of the breakfast-room, where hung her two texts. Imagine her consternation to find them taken down, and leaning with their faces against the wall, while the place of one was occupied by a large un-

framed oil-painting, and the corner itself by Adele's easel, upon which was a canvas containing an outline sketch of the painting above. Rhoda uttered an exclamation of dismay and sorrow.

"What is the matter?" asked Adele, who was just entering from the library.

"Adele, why have you removed my pictures?" asked Rhoda, excitedly.

"I wanted that corner for my easel and copy," said Adele, carelessly, "and I knew you would not care, for there is plenty of room for them upstairs; they are ugly things, any way."

"But I do care very much, and this is my own corner," said Rhoda, the tears starting.

"Well, I cannot help it now, you know," said Adele, looking at her canvas, and humming a tune. Then, sitting down, and taking up her brush, she commenced to paint, re-

marking, as she did so, "If you'll just run upstairs, Rhoda, I'll be much obliged; I don't like to have any one look over me when I paint."

Rhoda, with quivering lip, did as she was bidden, taking the pictures with her. She carried them to her own room, and put them out of sight. She did not want to hang them anywhere but in the sunny corner which was so dear to her. She determined to ask her father if she must be driven out of all her old haunts, and have no admission into the home once so sunny and pleasant to her. She felt so forlorn and lonely, and wandered about without doing any thing until it was almost time for her father's return. Then she went into the newly formed study, and found that her father had sent home three beautiful hanging-baskets for the windows, and a large

azalia bush in full bloom. The room looked so bright and pleasant, that Rhoda was cheered, particularly as she remembered her expressed wish for flowers. She sat down on a low stool by the side of the fire and waited for her father, feeling that he was the only friend she had in the house which she called home. By and by he came, worn out with the day's work, and ready to lean back in his chair and rest. Rhoda had not the heart to complain then, but thanked him for the flowers, and praised them until he smiled at her. She hovered near him, talking gaily, and trying to cheer him, until at length he drew her towards him, saying, "You charm every disagreeable thought away from me, Rhoda." Just then there was a tap at the door, and Adele came in. She stepped forward into the firelight, saying, "Really, you look quite cosy here. Rhoda, dear, I've made another

mistake in that rose; you'll pick it out for me, will you not?"

She sat down on the stool Rhoda had left, and gave up her work. Rhoda patiently bent over it, listening while she did so to Adele's gay chatter with her father. It was all about herself and the merry-makings abroad and at home which constituted her life. When Rhoda had finished the ripping, and commenced the work anew for her, she kissed and thanked her, and ran off. Rhoda was not sorry to see her go.

"I am so glad, Rhoda, that you and Adele get on so finely together," said her father, with an affectionate look at her; "but I might have known any one could live happily with my sunbeam."

Rhoda could not say a word about the pictures after that; and they remained standing in her closet with their faces against the wall.



CHAPTER XVIII.

ALONE.

“Cast thy burden upon the Lord and He shall
sustain thee.”

RHODA returned to school very cheerfully, and amid her old companions was her old self again.

She had long stories to tell of her summer at Little Commons and the long rambles in the woods, of berry-picking and flower-hunting, and she told her tales so well that she never wanted for a listener. On one subject, however, she was mute,—at the stone cottage, in her letters to Little Commons, with her young companions, and in her father’s company,—her daily life at home. If she

was asked how she liked her new sister, she generally replied, "I do not see much of her." Aunt Patty was troubled by the studied silence, and suspected a great deal she did not say. She asked Rhoda the usual question, to which the girl gave the vague reply, "It seems strange to have another in the house," which of course told nothing.

One day she drew Rhoda gently towards her and said, "Rhoda, is home as happy now as before you went to Little Commons?"

Rhoda flushed and hesitated. "Aunt Patty," she said at last, with a heavy sigh, "I don't think I ought to say any thing about it, for papa's sake."

Aunt Patty kissed her and respected her silence, but tried to have her spend as much time as possible at the cottage. Still there were many, many hours and days when she

was at home ; and that meant, except during the evening, totally by herself. Adele was in and out, but constantly busy with her own affairs or those of Will. Aunt Jane had been set aside from her housekeeping, and occupied a little house on the other side of the city. Rhoda visited her when she could, and was a great comfort to the old lady. Mrs. Dana was more confined to her children than formerly, for Louise was away at school. Rhoda saw her but seldom, and Alfred almost never ; he was busy at his work from early morning till late at night. Long hours were spent in reading, and in writing letters to Aunt Lottie, Jamie, and Helen. Aunt Lottie perceived something wanting in the tone of Rhoda's letters, and she, too, asked questions ; but it is so easy to evade in a letter, and she had no satisfactory answer.

I do not mean to have you think for one

minute that Rhoda was purposely neglected. Her father was attentive to every physical want, and to all her expressed wishes, but he was necessarily from home a great part of the time. Will laughed at her about her affection for Little Commons, and brought her home sweets, and Adele occasionally took her with her when she went shopping. But there was no one to listen to her queries and to be interested in her pursuits; no one to chat with about school and its attendant interests; no one to see that she was happy and well; no one to counsel her in her Christian walk, and her back grew heavy with its load.

Her comfort was her father. She was glad to see him happy and contented, and would not disturb his peace by any pleading of loneliness on her own part. She scolded herself continually for her own misgivings,

and redoubled her efforts to make her father's life happy.

One afternoon she was detained at the stone cottage by a fall of snow; and as night came on it increased rather than lessened, and she did not return to town until the next morning, when she accompanied her uncle. It was late when she arrived, and, only stopping to acquaint her father with her whereabouts, she went directly to school. She always felt a little more lonely than usual after a visit to the cottage, and she trudged home over the whitened pavement after school was over with any thing but a cheerful face.

As she passed Mr. Carrington's bookstore, longing for some one to chat with, she thought she would step in a moment and speak to Alfred. She had never been to the store before, but she summoned courage enough to enter. Alfred came forward smiling, with

extended hand. They stood talking for some minutes, and then he said, "Rhoda, I'm glad you came in, for I've a friend here I want you to know."

He left her for a minute, and returned in company with a young lady about seventeen.

"This is Mr. Carrington's daughter," said Alfred; "and Clara, you have often heard me speak of Rhoda Rushton."

"Clara is Mr. Carrington's assistant-book-keeper, Rhoda, which makes it very pleasant for me, you know, for she is here all the time. I often think we enjoy ourselves very much as you and I used to do."

Rhoda smiled, and spoke to the pretty, earnest-looking girl. "I am glad to have seen you," she said, "and I can understand just how much you enjoy yourselves here."

"The rainy days are the most pleasant," answered Clara, "for papa is teaching us both

German, and I often go over to Mrs. Dana's to supper, and return here in the evening."

"We don't see you at our house often now," said Alfred. "Mother says she misses you."

"I must try to do better then," said Rhoda. "Come up and see us; and, Miss Carrington, I shall be glad to welcome you too."

"Thank you, Rhoda," said Alfred, "you are always kind; we will come together some evening."

Rhoda took leave of them, still smiling; but the snow melted at the reception of several warm tear-drops upon its white surface as she hastened homeward with her veil down. There is something very good and very pleasing about a boy and girl friendship, — one in which there is nothing silly or sentimental, but where the interests of two are made one, and each is made better.

Whether study, pleasure, or mutual affection is the bond, the boy is made gentler and more unselfish, and the girl more self-reliant and ambitious. It is better than a friendship between girls, because, in that case, neither is incited to higher effort: it is better than a friendship between boys; there is nothing in that to smooth away roughness or lift the souls to higher things.

Such a friendship Rhoda could not help knowing she had lost, not through any fault of hers or his, but simply that in her absence another had stepped in to fill her place. She could easily see that Clara was in every way one fitted to be a good friend; and while Rhoda was glad for Alfred and glad for Clara, she was sorry for herself. There did not seem to be any place for her, and she felt like a stray lamb even when she slowly ascended the steps of her own home.

She took off her wrappings in the hall and went into the library. There had been company the evening before, and plates with orange skins piled upon them were standing upon the table. A dish of nuts, with some shells lying about it, stood on a light-stand, together with three or four glasses half-filled with lemonade. Rhoda, feeling miserable enough already, drew her shoulders together and sought the recess of a window, and, sitting down there, looked out absently into the street. The houses opposite were silent stone blocks, and Rhoda wondered how much happiness there was inside each one. A carriage stood before one door, and presently a lady and her daughter came down the steps of the house. The daughter held her mother's arm carefully that she should not slip, and helped her into the carriage; the door closed with a bang which went to the bottom of Rhoda's heart, and they rolled away.'

Presently round the corner came Floy's brother, buttoning himself proudly into a nice great-coat, which Rhoda knew was Floy's gift to him. He was whistling merrily, and looked very happy and contented.

A little boy and girl came running by, the latter crying with the cold. "Never mind, sis," Rhoda heard the boy say, "you'll get home soon, and then mammy'll take yer, and yer won't cry any more."

Just then their own carriage came to the door and stopped. The coachman sprang down, threw blankets upon his horses, and began to pace up and down, beating his hands. In a moment the library door opened and Adele came in.

"Ah!" she exclaimed, "what a disgraceful room!" and, stepping forward, she rang the bell. Rhoda did not move, but from where she sat she could see that Adele was elegantly

dressed, and was evidently going out for the evening. She stood warming her feet upon the fender and drawing on her gloves.

When the servant appeared, she said, "Jones, I gave orders that this room should be arranged. I wish you would see that it is done. Is the carriage at the door?"

Coming to the window to look for herself, she found Rhoda. "Why, child, how you frightened me," she said, starting. "How long have you been here? Why didn't you find a warmer place—or a cleaner?" and she laughed.

Rhoda replied that she had only been in a short time.

"Be good enough to tell papa that Will and I will not be in to tea, or until late. Just fasten my glove."

Rhoda did as she was bidden silently, and Adele moved away. "By the way, Rhoda,"

she said, turning back, "the clean linen has come up from the laundry. I wish you would just separate your own and your papa's things; I had no time."

"I will do it," replied Rhoda.

"You are very short about it; variations of temper do not affect me, however; good-by." Adele left the room; the coachman put her into the carriage, and they were gone, and Rhoda's head was bowed upon the window-sill.

"Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee." These words came into her mind now that she had a burden of her own to bear; and, amid her sobs, she could not help wondering at the perfection of God's plan. "Bear ye one another's burdens," the Lord said, and when the back is weary with its own load, "my strength is sufficient for thee." In a few minutes this

thought and Christ's promise, "Lo! I am with you always," soothed her, and her sobs were stilled. Not any too soon, for the door opened again, and her father came in.

"This is a neat-looking place," he grumbled, "and as cold as a barn. Not a rest for the sole of my foot in my own house. I do not believe my study has been entered to-day, if I may judge from the appearance."

Rhoda sprang up, conscience-smitten. Had she been neglecting her duty to nurse her own selfish sorrow? "Papa," she said, coming quickly forward, "what is the matter?"

"There isn't a spark of fire in the study, Rhoda, and not a room in the house is habitable. How long have you been at home?"

"Not more than an hour, papa. Stay here a few minutes and I will make the study comfortable."

Duty is the surest thing to drive away

disconsolate thought. By the time Rhoda had the fire made and the room arranged, she was able to meet her father cheerfully. "See how we miss you when you are away," he said. "I am glad we are to take tea by ourselves to-night."

Perhaps he saw traces of tears on Rhoda's face, and perhaps not; but, at any rate, he exerted himself to be particularly merry all the evening, playing backgammon with Rhoda, and singing, to his own accompaniment, funny old songs of his boyhood. They left a light burning in the library when they at last retired, and Rhoda was awakened at what seemed to her a very late hour with the stopping of a carriage at the door and voices in the hall. There was a good deal of talking and laughter on the staircase, and it was some time before Rhoda slept again.

She had finished her breakfast the next

morning, and was drying her papa's paper by the fire, when Adele came in. "Good morning, papa and Rhoda," she said. "You think me late, I daresay, but you would not have gained much by my company this morning, for I'm very stupid. I think I must have been so for some time, Rhoda, for Will gave me a letter he took from the postman day before yesterday, and I forgot to deliver it to you."

Rhoda took it hastily, and tore it open; she read it through, and then, with an exclamation, gave it to her father. It was from Helen.

"DEAR RHODA, — I've found out what all the trouble is at our house, and I do not think I shall want for God's work to do any longer. Papa has failed, and we are obliged to leave Cosy Nook and come into the city;

not to the old home on the Square, either. Lucy is beside herself, and so is papa ; there are only two steady ones in the family, mamma and myself, — mamma, because she is as good as she can be, and would bear up under any thing for our sakes ; and I, because I'm so glad to have some of the world's work to do at last. Cosy Nook is for sale, furnished, and we are to arrange a little house at 714 Berry Street, with some of the furniture from the old place on the Square. We move to-morrow ; therefore, by the day after I expect to see you, both for the comfort and the help you will be. Do not pity me, for it will be quite wasted.

“ HELEN.”

“ I must go down there at once, papa,” said Rhoda ; “ the letter has been delayed. What will Helen think of me ? ”

“ Poor Bradley, I have been expecting this for some time. I will drive you down there immediately, Rhoda, if you will get ready. It is a great pity this letter was not delivered sooner.”

Adele listened in silence, and they both left the room without more words. Rhoda hastily prepared for her visit, and they were soon riding swiftly down Berry Street. 714 was a small brick house, before the door of which stood a furniture van. Mr. Rushton stopped and assisted Rhoda out. She said “ thank you ” hastily, and ran up the steps where she was received into Helen’s open arms.





CHAPTER XIX.

RHODA'S PLAN.

"Every thing comes in time to him who can wait."



RHODA found plenty of work at 714. Helen was almost worn out, having done far too much of the labor of moving. Her sister was good for nothing; and her mother, although willing, was harassed by care. The house was in a forlorn condition, and Rhoda was busy, hands and feet, all day. Helen's expressions of joy at the change were almost ludicrous. Now she was finding so much to do for others, she exclaimed that it really seemed as if she was of some use in the world.

Her mother drew her to her side, her eyes filled with tears. "I do not know what we should have done without this dear girl all these sad days," she said.

Rhoda and Helen, between them, were so cheery and active, that they finally brought the smiles into the faces of all the family, and they had a merry lunch from the top of a packing case.

Rhoda was tired out when she left the house, but, notwithstanding, she was very busy revolving a plan in her mind, which looked very bright indeed, but which had a great many "ifs" about it. It served her for thought in her leisure hours for almost a week, and at length she ventured to impart her scheme to another. When she had decided on this, she was impatient for an opportunity to arrive which would be just right. Her father arrived at home later than usual

that night, and had two evening papers instead of one for her to read to him. It seemed to her that there never was so much news before when she least wanted to read it. Finally, however, it was actually finished, and Rhoda leaned back in her chair with a sigh of relief.

“Papa,” she said, after a moment’s silence, “how old are you?”

“Sixty, my dear,” replied her father, with a smile, adding: “You did not know you had such an aged father, did you?”

“I did not quite know, papa. Do not gentlemen of your age sometimes give up business?”

“Sometimes, my dear, when they are wealthy enough.”

“Are you not a rich man, papa?”

“Yes, Rhoda,” he replied soberly, after a pause. “God has given me very many flocks and herds, or what stands for them in these

modern times." He mused about it a few minutes, looking into the fire.

"Papa," said his daughter's voice again, "why don't you retire, as they call it, — give up business, and stay at home?"

He turned his gentle face towards her. "What are you scheming in your little head?" he asked, smiling. "I never thought of such a thing."

"But, papa," said Rhoda, flushing in her eagerness, "you say you are a rich man, and need not do any more work; and, knowing how much you enjoy all sorts of comforts, I thought that it might be more comfortable for you to have a home of your own,—quite your own, I mean,—without any strangers in it, where we could live together and make life bright and pleasant. We could then be alone when we chose, and have company when we chose,—not in the city, where we could never

be quite alone, but in the country, which we both like so much. The idea first entered my mind last September, when you went with me to Cosy Nook and said, 'Ah! Rhoda, if we had this place all to ourselves, how happy we might be!' I have thought of it still more lately, as Cosy Nook is now for sale, thoroughly furnished."

"Ah! little warrior," said her father, laughing, "you have laid your plans well for an attack on my fortress; now let me see how well you can stand fire. How do you suppose Will and Adele will be pleased?"

"Will can take this house, papa, and"—Rhoda stopped and hesitated.

"Well, go on."

"I was only going to say, papa, what perhaps I should not, that I heard Adele complaining a few days ago because the whole house was not under her sway."

“H’m! you did. Well, your Cosy Nook is a very elegant little place, and elegant little places require some controlling hands to keep them in that state. How do you propose to arrange that?”

“There, papa, you have touched upon one of my grand points. You know Floy is a year older than I am, and has been under Aunt Patty’s training ever since I went away; she is very capable, and Aunt Patty says she is a good housekeeper. How would it do for Floy and me to take care of Cosy Nook? Aunt Patty does not need her any more, and told me the other day that they should have to dismiss her in the spring, because they did not need her any longer. So this part of the plan, besides benefiting us, would provide for her.”

“The troops rally under fire from our guns,” laughed her father. “Well, who will

take care of the wardrobe of my young housekeeper?"

"I do it for myself now, papa, and there I should have Aunt Lottie to help me."

"I asked Adele to take charge of your wardrobe," said her father.

"Adele is busy almost all the time," returned Rhoda, quietly.

"H'm!" said Mr. Rushton, again eying his daughter keenly. "I hope you and Adele never disagree."

"Never, papa," returned Rhoda, lifting her frank eyes to his.

"Well, let me see. How would Miss Rhoda Rushton pursue her education in the wilds of Little Commons?"

"Papa, I hoped, perhaps, you would teach me as you used to do before you were so busy, and I have so longed for the old times back again. If any thing more is needed I

could come into the city now and then for a lesson in German or music."

"The fortress talks of surrender. How do you propose for me to spend the time not occupied with my daughter's education?"

"You said once, papa, that if you ever had leisure you would spend it in raising rare and beautiful ferns and flowers, and there is an extensive conservatory attached to Cosy Nook."

"How long have you been planning this attack?" said her father, leaning back in his chair to laugh; "and how do you propose to spend your own leisure time in the country?"

"I've been planning only a week, but I have thought very steadily during that time. I have many dear friends at Little Commons, but the best of it is, that there is so much there to do for Jesus, so many whom I can help to cheer, and so many burdens I can bear.

I have been leading such a selfish life since I came home."

Her father drew her towards him tenderly. "No, dear," he said, "that cannot be, for you have made one sad life bright, and one lonely life cheerful. I look forward every day to seeing your bright face when I return at night, and listening to your loving words of welcome. I will inquire the price of this expensive little project of yours, and give the subject serious thought."

Nevertheless Rhoda waited in vain for the result of her father's inquiries, and began to think that he had forgotten all about it, for day after day passed, and the subject was not referred to in any way. Mr. Rushton, however, had not forgotten; and, after many inquiries and much thought, he still hesitated until a slight incident finally decided him.

He came in one day at noon after some

papers from the library, and while searching for them he heard voices in the breakfast-room, which was separated from the library by folding-doors, which were closed. It was Adele who spoke.

“Why did you bring your work down here, Rhoda?”

“They are sweeping the study, Adele; I am drawing, and shall not disturb you.”

“Is not the library warm?” she asked, after a pause.

“No, the furnace fire has not been lighted to-day.” Another pause.

“How that pencil scratches! Can you not move to the other window, Rhoda? I’m trying to write a letter.”

“Certainly, if you desire it.” There was a movement in the room, and then it was still again for a few minutes. Presently Adele stirred impatiently. “Rhoda, have

you any good pens? This one is wretched; I wish you would get me one."

Rhoda left the room, and presently returned with the pen. "I hope this is a good one," said Adele. "Have they finished sweeping the study?"

"Yes, bŭt it is very cold there. I'll go up as soon as it is warm enough." She sat down again, and there was a silence for some minutes. Finally, Adele finished her task, and as she rose Rhoda rose too.

"Ah! going, are you?" said the sister. "Well, I was just about to paint, so it's a good thing the room is warm. Be good enough to give this letter to Jones, and ask him to mail it. Oh! Rhoda," calling her back, "I forgot to say that your aunt's nursery-maid was here yesterday afternoon, but you were busy, and I knew you did not care to see her, so I said you were engaged."

Mr. Rushton having finished his search sent the drawer in with a push which shook the whole cabinet, and went out of the house.

Coming into the study the next afternoon, Rhoda saw a note upon the table, and finding it addressed to herself, took it up. It was from papa.

“I shall be away from home until late this evening. You will find entertainment during my absence in the paper which lies in the table-drawer.”

Rhoda opened the drawer hastily, and found there a deed of sale to Richard Rushton, Esq., of the house, grounds, and furniture of *Cosy Nook*.

Rhoda had no need of company that evening, but sat with her face resting on her hands and her elbows on her knees, laying sunny plans. Then she wrote two letters, which, when they were received at Little

Commons, made one — a boy of twelve — throw his cap high in air with a shout, and the other—a gentle lady, with silver hair — almost cry because of the tender longing, in the letter, and her own dreams fulfilled. Papa said, with a shake of his head, that Rhoda must manage every thing; and he smiled as he watched her important face as she planned. Helen was very glad, but not surprised; she had hoped it would be so all the time.

As soon as possible, Rhoda went out to the stone cottage. She only kissed Floy, and then drew Aunt Patty away with her into the parlor, and told all her plans. She had a ready listener and sympathizer; indeed, Aunt Patty asked so many questions that Rhoda had to curb her impatience, and tell the whole story. At length, being dismissed, she rushed upstairs to the sewing-room, and, throwing her arms around Floy, cried out,

“O my dear friend! papa has bought Cosy Nook, and we want you to come and live with us to be our little housekeeper.”

Floy stared in amazement. “Your housekeeper!” she repeated. “What do you mean?”

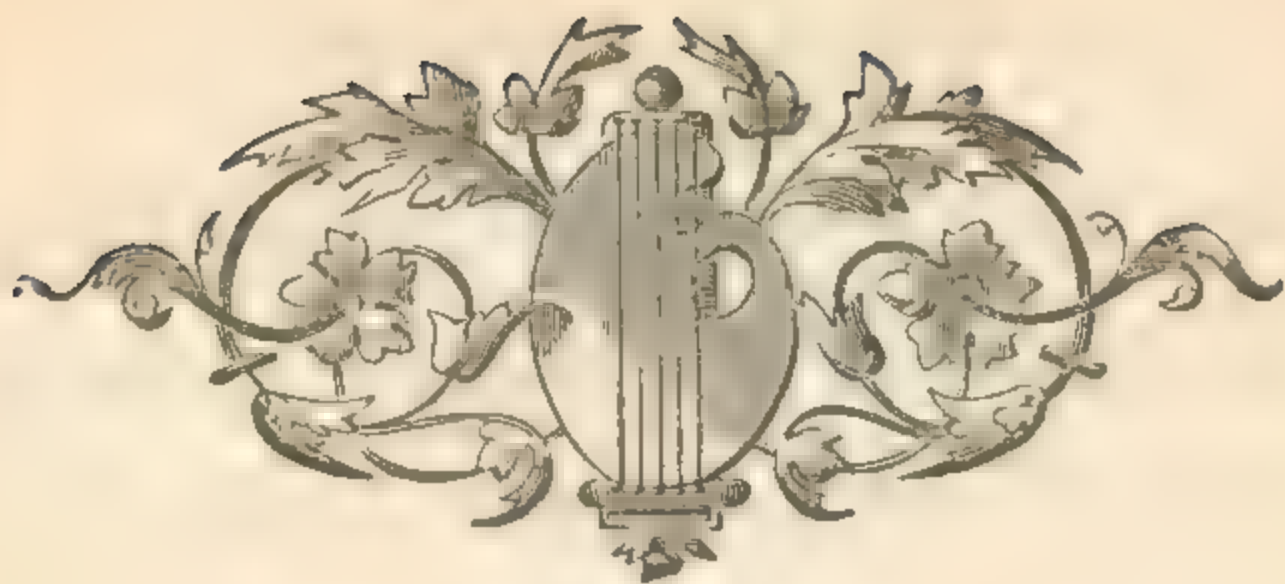
Rhoda was forced to control herself a little, and explain, not very clearly even at best. Floy insisted that she was not worthy of the trust imposed upon her, but Rhoda told her she was sure they would succeed. They talked the matter over until they had made all sorts of plans for the future, — possible and impossible.

Mr. Rushton found that what Rhoda hinted was true. Will and Adele were scarcely able to conceal their relief at the arrangement. Mr. Rushton was a little sorry that they were so glad, but it made their departure an easy task.

Rhoda went to her closet and peeped in at the texts which stood with their faces against the wall. "I shall be able to do my Master's work better at Little Commons, and I will find a sunny corner for my precious guides."

Her father thought the bright little face flitting about the house was a pleasant thing to see, and entered into all her plans with an almost childish enjoyment. And so the weeks slipped by.





CHAPTER XX.

THE NEW BEGINNING.

"All times are springs to God's dear new beginnings."

THEY were not to take possession of Cosy Nook until the first of May, but Rhoda could and did live very happily in the intervening months, anticipating the happiness and making preparations. She was a very busy girl; her father took care that this should be so, and kept her out of the house as much as he possibly could. He did not like the tired face he saw when he knew she had been at home all day, and was careful to be present at home when Adele was in for the evening.

Rhoda did not know how many annoyances she was saved; she only realized that time was passing swiftly away.

At length, when the buds were swelling again, and the frost oozing from the ground, they made their final preparations. Mr. Rushton told Rhoda, a few days before they left, that he had taken the liberty to add one item to her plans, and he hoped she would approve it. This item was Aunt Jane. "I was afraid that some day, when you and Floy were helping me to take care of my ferns, the housekeeping would be neglected," he said, laughing.

Rhoda was overjoyed and Floy relieved. "What shall I be able to do?" she asked doubtfully.

"I do not think either you or Rhoda will waste your time," replied Mr. Rushton.

They arrived at Cosy Nook at the very

prettiest time of the day, in the late twilight, when the long, rambling house lay half touched by the dying western light and half in deep shadow. In the eastern portion of the house lights were gleaming, and their glow, shining out through the crimson and lace of the windows, made pictures of beauty and home comfort. Rhoda was leaning forward in the carriage, full of eager expectation, and Floy's eyes were full of a sense of the loveliness about her. She was not sure that she was not dreaming, and that the sweet vision might at any moment be dispelled. They alighted at the steps, and Rhoda was exclaiming, "O papa! I smell hyacinths," when the door was opened, and she was clasped in Aunt Lottie's arms.

It seemed to Rhoda, when she was free to look about her, that the place was lovelier than ever. She put her hand upon Floy's

arm and led her about, enjoying a pleasure she had long been looking forward to of showing her this spot as her home. Flowers were everywhere,—in the niches, on the stair-cases, in the halls, in every room, and, finally, a few choice blossoms lay by each plate upon the supper-table, while in the centre there was a very pyramid of them.

“I think this is a fair beginning for *my* occupation,” said Mr. Rushton.

Rhoda laughed. “What fairy has been at work here, Aunt Lottie?” she asked.

“It is love’s work,” she replied. “It has been the day’s occupation of Mrs. Randolph, Jamie, and Miss Bedford. It was a rare entertainment to see and hear them arranging and talking. ‘Rhoda must have all the white hyacinths in her room,’ Jamie would say, ‘for she likes those best.’ He made a beautiful moss-picture on purpose for you, and he has

actually hung Fun's stall in the stable with all manner of fancy grasses. Miss Bedford arranged the music and the flowers on the piano and in the drawing-room, while Mrs. Randolph arranged the table. Mrs. McClure came up to the farm a week ago, and begged that she might do whatever cleaning was needed; and Mr. McClure has been ready to lift and carry at any moment. The old people in the wood have sent down a basket of nuts and some late apples, 'for dear Miss Rhoda.'"

"Who are all these people, Rhoda?" said her father, listening in amazement.

"Friends of mine, papa," replied Rhoda, as soon as she could command her voice.

"People whose lives she has helped to cheer," replied Aunt Lottie.

"I wish I had been here to help," said Floy. "I know just how they felt, — as if they never could do enough."

“Dear Helen,” said Aunt Lottie, “I wish she could be here to-night.”

“She has found her corner in life, and is as happy as a bee in midsummer,” said Rhoda.

They had a merry meal, and no one enjoyed it more than Aunt Jane, who was filled with pride at the prospect of overseeing such a beautiful house. She bustled about with her former activity, which had been much wanting since she had lived a lonely life, and had a full consciousness of what she termed her important position. “Dear papa, you never did a better act than that,” said Rhoda, as she watched her bustling about. “There is one life made happy.”

Rhoda had no opportunity of escaping love's work that night. The alcove room was redolent with the perfume of flowers, and Jamie's moss-picture was a master-piece in its way. The whole room seemed full of

peace; and Rhoda knelt before Helen's little table with an overflowing heart. How kind was the dear Lord for thus heaping good things upon her! She prayed Him in the fulness of her heart to give her more and more of His work to do, that she might spend her life in praising Him.

She was up very early the next morning; but when she went downstairs she found that Floy had been before her, and was standing in the front doorway gazing out into the spring morning. Her face was radiant as she turned toward Rhoda. "It is like a little piece of heaven," she said, catching her breath.

Rhoda held a reception all day. The first one to arrive was Jamie, overflowing with spirits, and bearing unnumbered messages from his mother. He was full of plans and projects, and he and Rhoda were soon deep

in a discussion of the best places to get spring flowers, the nearest way to favorite spots, the best time to go. "By the way, Rhoda," said Jamie, "up by the mill, just back of the dam, there is a family which will be glad to see you. There are three little girls there, and they are lonesome enough, I can tell you. I tried my best, but they are shy of a boy, and I knew you could cheer them up; you know it is a lonely place up there. That puts me in mind of another plan. Miss Bedford wants to study French. I know she would not ask you to teach her, but I thought I'd just tell you, and perhaps you would find a way. Then, out at the corner of the west road,—oh, dear! here comes Aunt Martha, so I must go. I'll tell you about it another time."

Aunt Lottie and Aunt Martha had welcome plans of long visits to the farm, in all of which Floy was to join. They were very

glad to have Rhoda back, and the time she had spent at home was not referred to.

Much to Rhoda's joy, her father was so pleased with some work that Michael McClure had done in the garden, that he engaged him for the season, and then listened with a moved face to the man's account of the service Rhoda had rendered to them in trouble. When he came into the house he found her with Floy and Miss Bedford, listening and planning for some of the scholars who were in need of books and clothing. Mr. Rushton looked at the three faces,—the girl whom Rhoda had lifted, and whose earnest face gave token of her character; the older one, who had through fiery trials been led to triumph, and whose eyes looked so far beyond the present; and, finally, at the sweet, calm, contented, thoughtful face which turned to his so lovingly, so gratefully.

"I think you have found your corner, Rhoda," he said, placing his hand on her head.

"Oh! yes, papa; God's corner rather, full of work for Him; and here are my friends all ready to go with me. Ah, how happy I am!"

She hung the texts that night in the alcove room, in the window with the deep recess,—one facing the east, the other the west. Then she called Floy to observe the effect.

"See," said she, "the new sunny corner is better than the old, and from this window I can look over the miles of country dotted with homes where I know there are heavy burdens, and into some of which God will lead me; so I look from my command to them, and back again to the promise, feeling glad that I can give something to Jesus in return for His love."

So the morning sun looked in upon the command, which day by day was obeyed, — “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ;” while the parting glow from the western sky fell full and softly upon the promise so often fulfilled, — “He that watereth shall be watered also himself.”

And Rhoda’s hands were filled with God’s work.





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